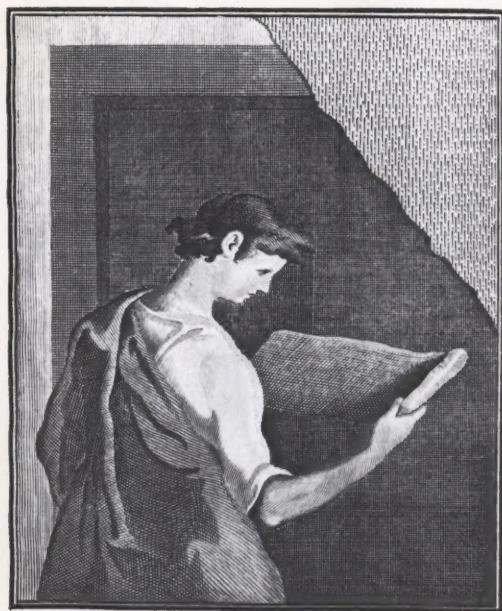


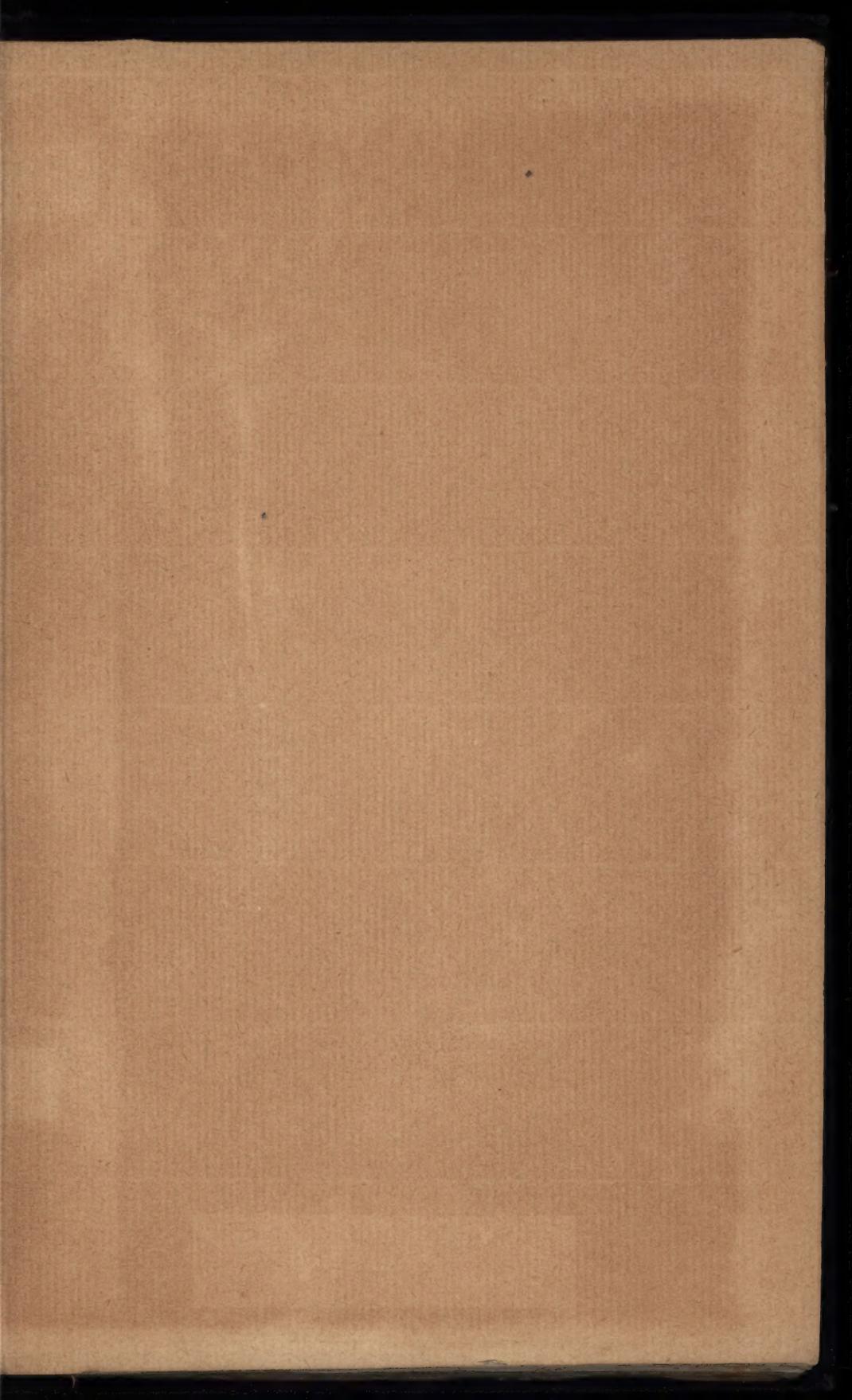
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WITH JAMES WARD  
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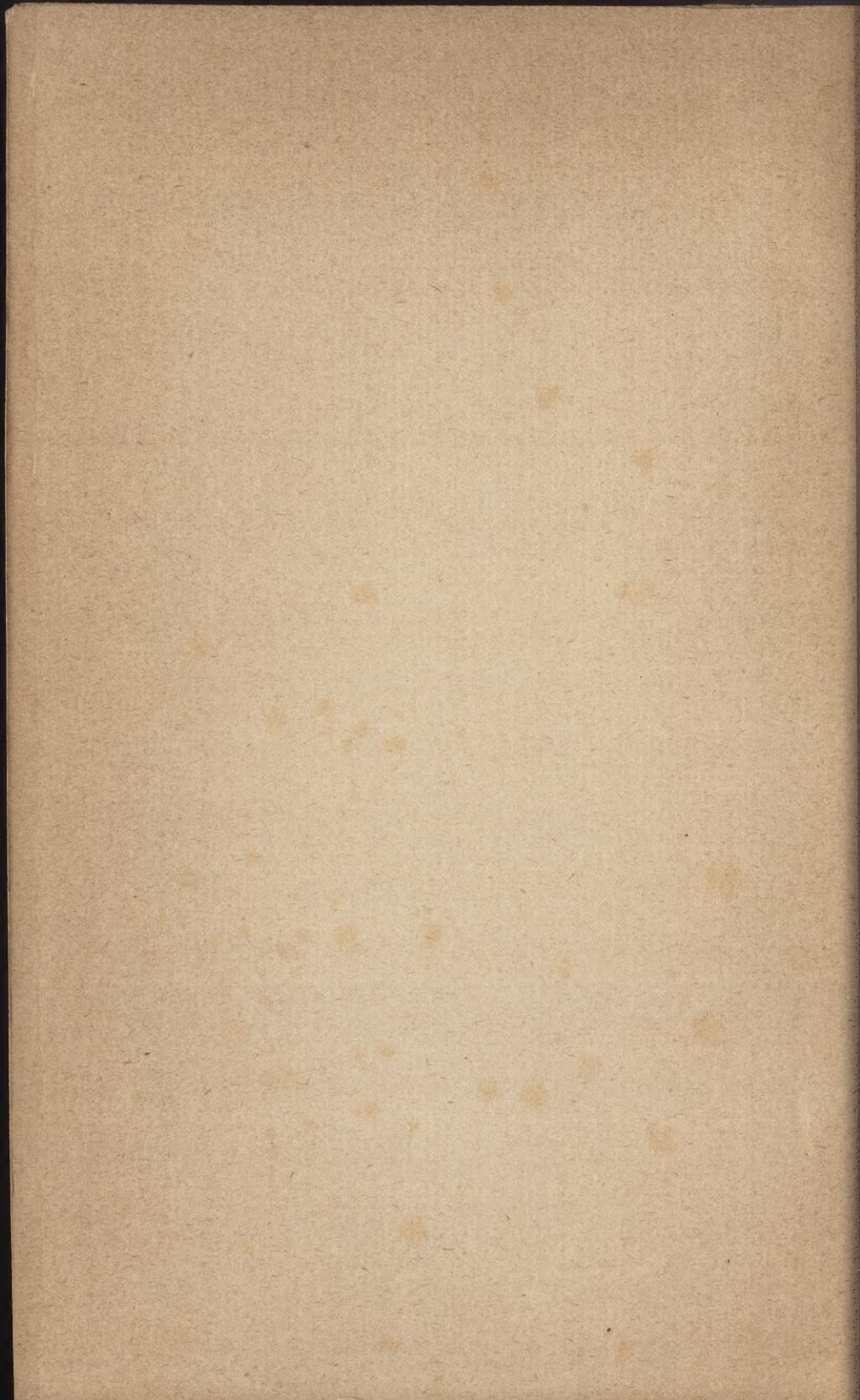


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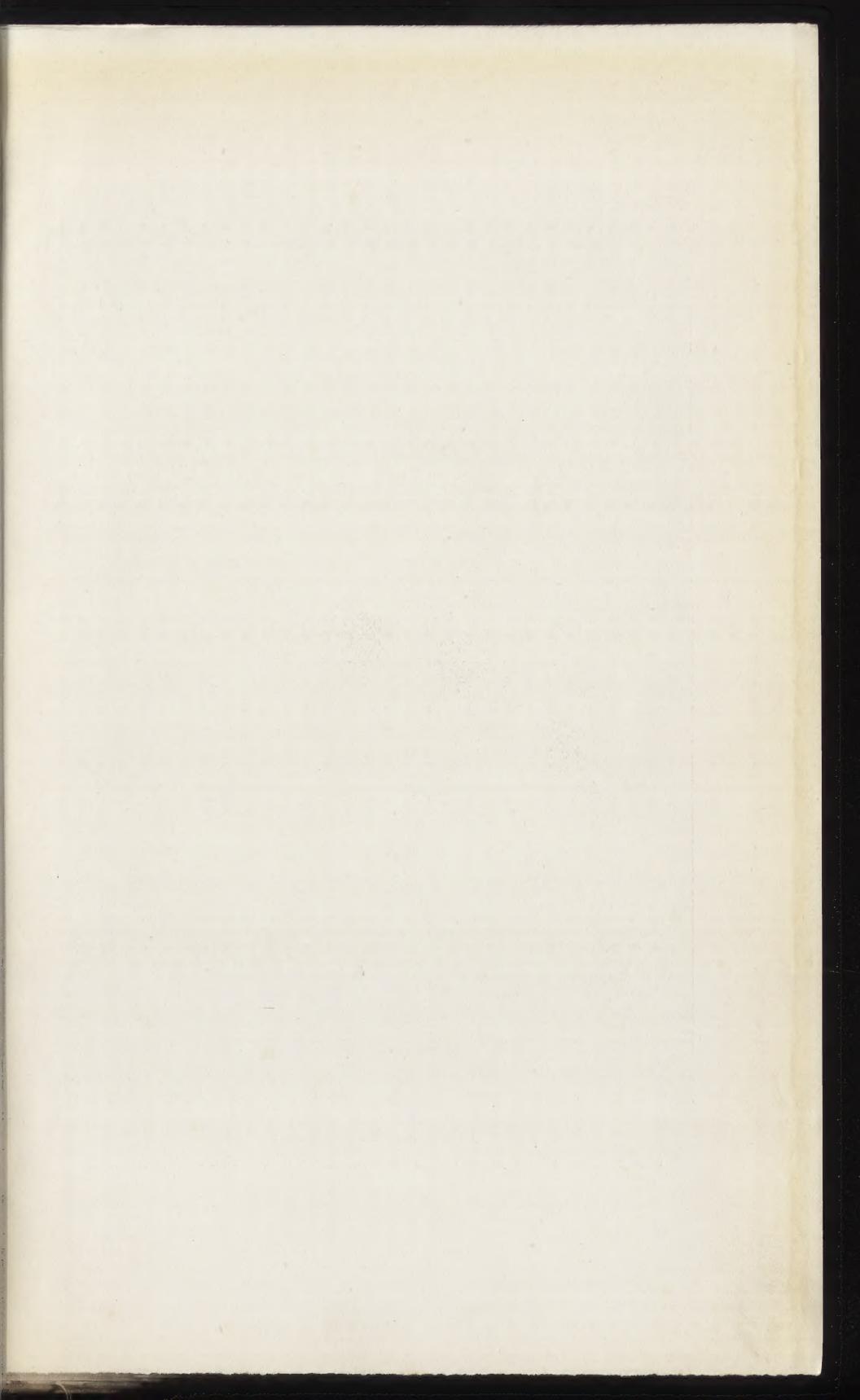
*Ulrich Middeldorf*





JAMES NORTHCOTE R.A.







JAMES NORTHCOTE, R.A.

FROM THE PAINTING BY JAMES WARD IN THE POSSESSION OF THE REV. G. F. HOLME, M.A.

JA



CONVERSATIONS OF  
JAMES NORTHCOTE R.A.  
WITH JAMES WARD  
ON ART AND ARTISTS

EDITED AND ARRANGED FROM  
THE MANUSCRIPTS AND NOTE-BOOKS OF JAMES WARD

BY  
ERNEST FLETCHER

WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS

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METHUEN & CO.  
36 ESSEX STREET W.C.  
LONDON  
1901



TO

MY ELDEST BROTHER

LAZARUS FLETCHER, F.R.S., AND AGNES WARD, HIS WIFE

BY WHOSE REQUEST I UNDERTOOK THIS WORK

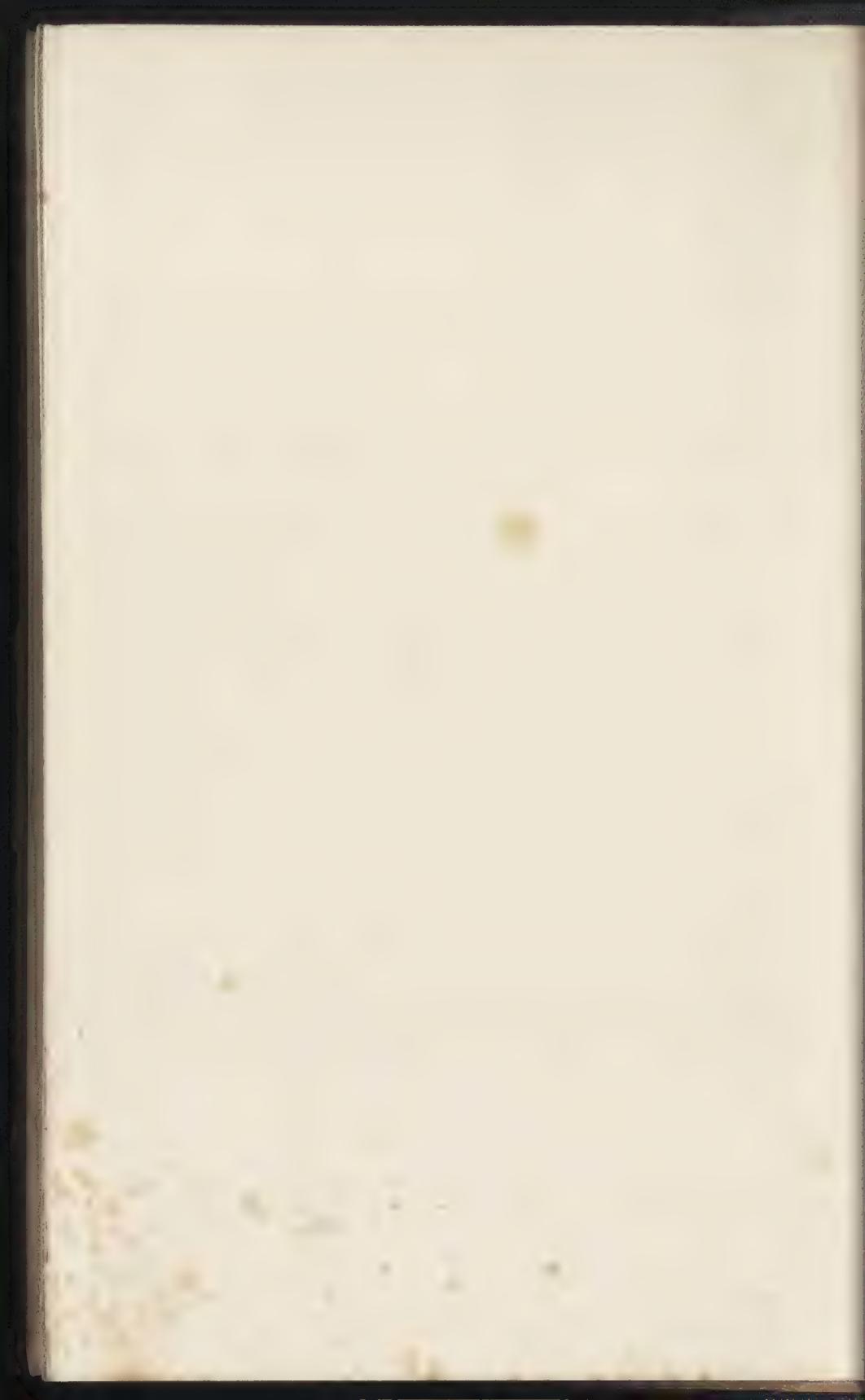
AND WHOSE LOVING DESIRE IT WAS THAT THE STORY OF A GREAT

FRIENDSHIP SHOULD NO LONGER REMAIN UNTOLD

I DEDICATE

IN MOST TRUE AND AFFECTIONATE REGARD

THIS BOOK



## P R E F A C E

ALTHOUGH James Northcote belonged to an age other than our own, it is scarcely necessary to offer any apology for the issuing of a volume which contains the hitherto unpublished intercourse of one who was esteemed by his contemporaries—including so high an authority and such an intimate as was William Hazlitt—to be the best conversationalist of his time.

Seventy years have now passed away since the death of Northcote, and, after so long an interval of time, a word or two may well be said relative to the history of the documents the existence of which has made the writing of this book possible.

James Ward, the devoted friend and admirer of Northcote for twenty-one years, died in 1850. His manuscripts and note-books, containing the record of that long intercourse, were part of a bequest to his nephew, the Reverend Thomas Holme, at that time of Uppermill, Lancashire, but afterwards, and until his death in 1890, of Moorside, near Oldham, of which parish he was vicar for a long period of years.

Ward had expressed a wish, towards the close of his life, that the notes which he had made during his friendship with Northcote might, sometime, be brought before the reading public; for they unquestionably throw much light on the character of his gifted friend, and embody the valuable opinions expressed by him on many topics of interest, especially on the various branches of the subjects connected with his profession.

But the task of bringing the material in question into something like practical shape and methodical arrangement was not a light one. The notes which Ward had made, copious, and embracing to a certain extent the technicalities of art, had not been recorded by him in the convenient form of a diary; the subjects, indeed, were often disconnected and were seldom dated. The explanation of this is found in an admission which Ward makes in one of his note-books, to the effect that, for many years, he was recording notes of Northcote's conversations, not with the object of their ultimate publication, but for his own personal benefit and pleasure, "and to while away, now and again, a leisure hour." He left behind him, certainly, a remarkable accumulation of valuable and interesting notes—a silent tribute to the memory of his famous friend, and to the value which he had set on his conversations—but they were not in that form which admitted of immediate publication, and the Vicar of Moorside

was called away without having been able to accomplish anything towards the fulfilment of his uncle's wish.

Upon Mr. Holme's decease, Ward's papers and note-books were deposited with my brother, Mr. L. Fletcher, M.A., F.R.S., Keeper of Minerals in the British Museum, who some years previously had married Mr. Holme's eldest daughter. In the summer of 1883, my brother was staying at Brantwood, and, upon observing one of Northcote's pictures there, he mentioned to Mr. Ruskin the existence of the Ward manuscripts. Mr. Ruskin asked to be allowed to see them; he subsequently became interested in them, and offered to superintend their publication. Before this work could be begun, his health had broken down for the last time, and it was known that his literary work was over.

Some years later my brother proposed to me that I should myself take the matter in hand, and thus give effect to the wish which James Ward had expressed half-a-century ago. The documents were thereupon obtained from Mr. Ruskin and forwarded to me: by this time they were yellow with age, and the writing had begun to fade. I felt, as did others, that the work ought to be done, and done quickly, if James Ward's records of Northcote's conversations were to be preserved. A duty seemed to be laid upon myself, and solely in that sense I undertook the work which was asked of me, but which,

## PREFACE

without doubt, could have been entrusted to abler and more experienced hands than my own.

I would here express a word of acknowledgment and thanks to my friend Mr. C. A. Toledano, of Manchester, and Dr. G. Senes, of Florence, for information which they have afforded me with regard to certain portraits in the Florentine galleries; and likewise to my brother, and the Rev. G. F. Holme, M.A., who have very kindly supplied me with the photographs, reproduced in this volume, of the portraits of James Ward and James Northcote, which are respectively in their possession.

And now, when I have brought to a conclusion what has been a real labour of love, I shall only express this hope;—that I have thrown a bright ray of light on a friendship of much interest and value, and have helped to save from oblivion some of the clever and brilliant utterances of a man who was assuredly one of the greatest and most remarkable figures of that far-shining and illustrious age in which he lived.

E. F.

BIRCHVILLE, EDGELEY, CHESHIRE:

*September 1901*

## C O N T E N T S

	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	vii
CHAPTER I. . . . .	I
<p>Northcote's birth and boyhood—He is apprenticed to his father's trade—Sees Sir Joshua Reynolds for the first time—Resolves to become a painter—He departs for London—Meets with little success, and waits upon Sir Joshua Reynolds—Is engaged by Sir Joshua as one of his pupils, and remains with him five years—Returns to Devonshire—Departs for Italy—Arrives in Rome, and stays there three years—He returns to his native county, but soon afterwards permanently settles in London—Is commissioned by Boydell to paint historical pictures for the Shakespeare Gallery—Elected Royal Academician—His industry—His literary work—Great conversational powers—James Ward commences a twenty-one years' friendship with him—Northcote's enthusiasm for Italy and the old masters—His simplicity of mind—Anecdote of the Duke of Clarence—The aged painter dies in harness.</p>	
CHAPTER II. . . . .	28
<p>Northcote's studio—He tells of his early struggles in London—His warning to would-be artists—Eminent artists should assist young beginners—His faith in his own ultimate success—Disliked painting away from his London home—He tells an anecdote of a visit to the West of England.</p>	
CHAPTER III. . . . .	39
<p>Northcote in praise of Italy—On the decay of art in that country—The stillness of the Vatican—His adventure there—Speaks of certain Popes—Prince Charles at Rome.</p>	
CHAPTER IV. . . . .	50
<p>Northcote on Titian, Raphael, Vandyke, Frans Hals, Rubens, and Paul Veronese.</p>	
CHAPTER V. . . . .	66
<p>Careless finishing the vice of the English school—In praise of Sir Joshua Reynolds—"The art of painting does not receive sufficient encouragement in England"—Sir Joshua not to be servilely copied—His peculiar excellence can never come again—He is compared with Vandyke—"The very ghosts of Sir Joshua's portraits remain fine"—His skill in painting the ladies' head-dresses of his time—On his great industry—His portraits of children—He was superior to ill-natured criticism.</p>	

## CONTENTS

## CHAPTER VI.

PAGE  
81

The American form of government—Northcote in praise of Court life and society—Anecdote of Mrs. Siddons—On superstition—On Master Betty, the boy-actor—A word concerning Ireland's counterfeit play “Vortigern”—On poets and authors—“They are not the wisest or greatest of men who have written books”—On physical defects—Homer and Shakespeare compared.

## CHAPTER VII.

97

Northcote's methods of painting—On art treatises—On colouring—Nature always in harmony—The Royal Academy—On colouring again—“Fine colouring is lost on the generality of mankind”—A word on scumbling—Gandy a great colourist—The best mode of commencing a picture—Figures in portraits should be as fine as possible—The naked female arm—“Sir Joshua glazed too much.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

113

Northcote speaks in praise of Boydell—The Shakespeare Gallery—Historical pictures should represent the popular idea of a subject—Painters should allow their works to tell their own story—Foreground figures must not be too large—“A man paints his very soul in historical painting”—A word concerning print-sellers and picture-dealers—On peasant manners—The sulky men on the Eddystone—Northcote's definition of a true gentleman—On Sir William Knighton: his early difficulties and ultimate success—Knighton's quarrel with Northcote concerning the latter's portrait of Sir Walter Scott—On instinct in animals—Their cruel treatment in England.

## CHAPTER IX.

134

Northcote's antipathy to William Pitt, the younger—In praise of Michael Angelo—Thorwaldsen's want of originality—The Louvre Gallery—On plagiarism—A word concerning Cuyp—Anecdote of Sir Thomas Lawrence—Northcote strongly criticises him—Anecdotes of Sir William Beechey—On Benjamin West—West and the bishops—Northcote on Bonaparte—“I painted him as if I had been painting a god.”

## CHAPTER X.

159

A word concerning Gainsborough—Northcote strongly criticises the Royal Academy—The picture-frames sent to the Exhibitions—Sir Joshua's reticent manner of speaking—Northcote speaks about his own conversational powers—Riches not always a barrier to true enterprise: instance of Sir Joseph Banks—“Painters nowadays give themselves airs”—On false pride: a word concerning John Jackson and Henry Thomson—Anecdote of the Duke of Clarence and the grocer's wife—On the conceit of certain painters: instances of Battoni and Raphael Mengs—The position of painters in England—The breakdown of William Owen, the portrait-painter—The envy of wealthy persons towards each other.

## CHAPTER XI.

181

James Ward's warning to would-be artists—Northcote on the progress of art—On indiscriminate charity—Painters must obtain patronage—On historical painting—Artists must unceasingly study the beautiful—On painting the ladies—Portraits are but inadequate substitutes for absent friends—A nobleman's visit—Northcote and the period of Edward IV.

## CONTENTS

xiii

PAGE

196

### CHAPTER XII.

Northcote on the conversation of Johnson, Goldsmith, and Burke—Speaks concerning Opie and Hoppner—"Opie ought never to have married"—On Thomas Foster's sad end—"The delusion of friendship"—In praise of stratagem—"The public a great baby with immense fists"—A painter should never desert a run of employment—On Opie again—On the method of proceeding with a portrait feature by feature—Northcote relates an amusing anecdote—Sir Godfrey Kneller—On whole-length portraits—The ambition must be to paint the ladies well—On difficult subjects for portraits—Opie again—The wealthy Duchess of St. Albans.

### CHAPTER XIII.

217

Northcote watching his picture in the fading twilight: the advantage of this—He speaks concerning the industry of professional men—"There never was a picture in this world finished"—On the success of his own pictures—The four perfect pictures of the world—In praise of Raphael's "Miracle of Bolsena"—Painters should always endeavour to paint from nature—John Jackson, R.A.—A word concerning constitutional virtues.

### CHAPTER XIV.

230

Northcote on newspaper criticism—Painters should not allow criticism to make them despondent—William Doughty, a pupil of Sir Joshua's—Artists should frequent each other's rooms—Northcote criticises Sir Joshua's "Death of Cardinal Beaufort"—"Ah! poor Grandi! he never looked up after Sir Joshua painted him as Warwick!"—On painting figures clad in robes or armour—A word concerning Turner and Constable—Beauty a necessity in a picture—Northcote on the study of anatomy—The works of Milton and Shakespeare—Anecdote of Garrick and the butcher's dog—About Mrs. Abington—Edmund Kean—"Players have no nature in them"—Six books that should be read—Certain pictures are out of place in private houses—Northcote looking at his own picture in the Guildhall—He speaks strongly in criticism of Milton—"Insects like us to represent the great Creator!"—The character of Jesus.



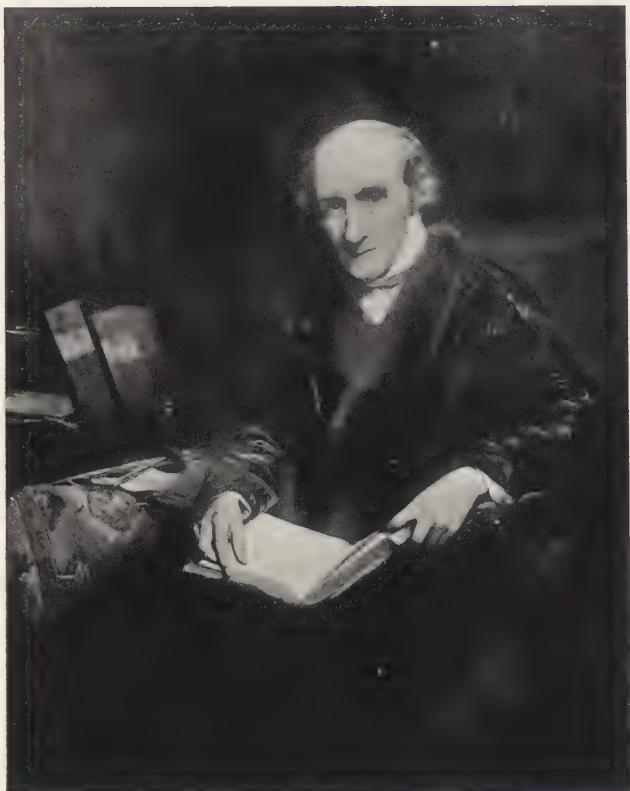
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. JAMES NORTHCOTE, R.A. <i>From the painting by James Ward in the possession of the Rev. G. F. Holme, M.A.</i>	Frontispiece
2. JAMES NORTHCOTE, R.A. <i>From the painting by John Jackson, R.A., in the National Gallery</i>	To face p. 1
3. JAMES WARD. <i>From the painting by himself in the possession of L. Fletcher, Esq., F.R.S.</i>	, 15
4. TITIAN. <i>From the painting by himself in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence</i>	, 20
5. SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, P.R.A. <i>From the painting by himself in the National Gallery</i>	, 30
6. RAPHAEL. <i>From the painting by himself in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence</i>	, 50
7. ST PAUL PREACHING AT ATHENS. <i>From the cartoon by Raphael in the South Kensington Museum</i>	, 58
8. "CHAPEAU DE PAILLE." <i>From the painting by Rubens in the National Gallery</i>	, 60
9. RUBENS. <i>From the painting by himself in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence</i>	, 62
10. BACCHUS AND ARIADNE. <i>From the painting by Titian, now in the National Gallery</i>	, 64
11. VANDYKE. <i>From the painting by himself in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence</i>	, 74
12. MRS SIDDONS. <i>From the painting by Thomas Gainsborough, R.A., in the National Gallery</i>	, 84
13. RAISING OF LAZARUS. <i>From the painting by Sebastiano del Piombo, now in the National Gallery</i>	, 86
14. DR SAMUEL JOHNSON. <i>From the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds in the National Gallery</i>	, 124
15. SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE, P.R.A. <i>From the painting by himself in the National Gallery</i>	, 144
16. BENJAMIN WEST, P.R.A. <i>From the painting by Gilbert Stuart in the National Portrait Gallery</i>	, 153

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

17. THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A. <i>From the painting by himself in the Royal Academy</i> . . . . .	To face p. 159
18. JOHN OPIE, R.A. <i>From the painting by himself in the National Portrait Gallery</i> . . . . .	199
19. JOHN JACKSON, R.A. <i>From the painting by himself in the National Portrait Gallery</i> . . . . .	226
20. JAMES NORTHCOTE IN HIS 84TH YEAR. <i>From a drawing by James Lonsdale</i> . . . . .	248





JAMES NORTHCOTE, R.A.

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN JACKSON, R.A., IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY

CONVERSATIONS OF  
JAMES NORTHCOTE, R.A.  
WITH JAMES WARD  
ON ART AND ARTISTS

CHAPTER I

Northcote's birth and boyhood—He is apprenticed to his father's trade—Sees Sir Joshua Reynolds for the first time—Resolves to become a painter—He departs for London—Meets with little success, and waits upon Sir Joshua Reynolds—Is engaged by Sir Joshua as one of his pupils, and remains with him five years—Returns to Devonshire—Departs for Italy—Arrives in Rome, and stays there three years—He returns to his native county, but soon afterwards permanently settles in London—Is commissioned by Boydell to paint historical pictures for the Shakespeare Gallery—Elected Royal Academician—His industry—His literary work—Great conversational powers—James Ward commences a twenty-one years' friendship with him—Northcote's enthusiasm for Italy and the old masters—His simplicity of mind—Anecdote of the Duke of Clarence—The aged painter dies in harness.

JAMES NORTHCOTE was born at Plymouth on the 22nd of October, 1746. He was the second son of humble parents, his father following the trade of a watchmaker in that town. The house in which he first saw the light was but an unpretentious one; in one of its two small windows the father worked at his calling, and in the other his mother displayed a few trivial articles, chiefly small-wares, to attract the notice and patronage of the passer-by.

Northcote was born in days when education in this country, even of the most elementary kind,

was a luxury and an advantage only too frequently denied to the offspring of poor and struggling parents. Several authors, who have written biographical sketches of his life, have made futile efforts to ascertain where he received his early education. The records of the local grammar-school were consulted; but his name was never enrolled there. One writer declares that, though Northcote loved to talk about himself, he said little either about his parentage or his education, and suggests that what little education he did receive was derived from the minister of the little meeting-house of which his father and mother were members. But, in the ordinary sense of the word, poor Northcote never received any education whatever. We have his own testimony before us as we write, that the only school which he ever had the privilege of attending was one kept by an old woman in the neighbourhood of his home, and that the good dame taught him nothing save the alphabet. By imitating the printed letters in a book, the boy taught himself to write, and he tells us that this, for some time, was the only method of writing which he was able to practise.

It appears that he was very desirous of learning to read, but his difficulties were not lessened, and his self-imposed task was certainly not made lighter, by the fact that his father, who possessed a small collection of books, kept them strictly locked up in

an upper room, the boy being forbidden, probably from motives of economy, ever to touch them. His resolution, however, was equal to his desire for knowledge, and having one day become possessed, in his parent's absence, of one of these books, he manfully fought his way through a few sentences, and was afterwards unable to rest until he had mastered the whole of its contents. He had crossed the threshold of learning, and it now became his habit to steal stealthily upstairs, where, in the silence and privacy of his father's bedroom, he would read Rapin's *History of England*, or any other work which the paternal parent had not been careful enough to put away.

James Northcote was apprenticed, at an early age, to his father's trade. He had already evinced an instinctive love for drawing and painting; but his father was too poor in this world's goods to show him any encouragement in a pursuit which might end only in failure, and the lad was accordingly kept to the task of cleaning and repairing watches. His heart, however, was elsewhere, and to his drawings and portraits was devoted every moment of his leisure time. He had looked with delight and wonder on Sir Joshua Reynolds' pictures which had found a home in his native town—and the boy's enthusiasm was further excited when, in the autumn of 1762, Reynolds himself and Dr. Johnson arrived in Plymouth on their West-country tour. The two

famous men attended a crowded public meeting during their stay in the town, and there, in the midst of the crowd, was the sixteen-year-old boy, looking, for the first time, on the face of the world-famous painter. The soul of the lad burned within him as he saw before him the hero of his dreams. Forcing his way through the crowd, the boy arrived within arm's length of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and touched the skirt of the master's coat. And in that moment of reverence and enthusiasm, young Northcote resolved that he, too, would become a painter.

Devoting himself more assiduously than ever to the art which he loved, the ardent youth began to attract attention by the cleverness with which he executed his drawings and portraits. His parents now applauded his efforts, and, although he was still apprenticed to his father's trade, a painting-room, small and bare, was set aside for his use. He soon began to earn more money with his pencil than he did at his trade, and it was evident to those around him that he had made a determination to become a figure in the world of art.

In May, 1771, when he was nearly five-and-twenty years of age, James Northcote turned his back on his native town, and arrived in London for the first time in his life, determined to succeed in the calling upon which he had set his heart. He bore with him a letter of introduction to Sir

Joshua Reynolds from Dr. John Mudge, a Plymouth physician, who was well acquainted with his history, and who was a member of a family with which Sir Joshua was on terms of the greatest intimacy. He did not, however, as has been supposed, immediately present that letter to the great painter. With that independence of spirit and that self-reliance which never failed him throughout his long life, Northcote endeavoured for a brief space to earn his bread in the metropolis by his own unaided efforts.

He met with little success, however, and, in the following chapter, he tells us, in his own language, something of the struggles of those early London days. Finally, he waited upon Sir Joshua Reynolds and presented his letter of introduction, whereupon the great man desired him to call again and bring some of his paintings with him. This was a welcome request, of course, to James Northcote, and he soon stood again in the master's presence. The young artist's specimens were approved, and he was engaged immediately by Sir Joshua as one of his pupils. He entered forthwith upon his residence at Sir Joshua's, and he lived and boarded in the house for the following five years. This was an important stage of his life. He painted the hands and figures and draperies of the different portraits upon which the famous painter was engaged. He saw, and spoke

with, Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson, who were regular visitors at his master's house. He heard the conversations of these and the other brilliant men of letters who were wont to gather round the hospitable board of the world-famous painter. It was understood that those of Sir Joshua's pupils who received board and lodging for their labour should remain with him for a period of four years, but Northcote elected to remain an extra year, feeling that he could render much more valuable assistance to his master in that year, than he had done during the earlier part of his apprenticeship.

One May morning, in the year 1776, James Northcote departed from the house which had sheltered him during five busy and valuable years. He told Sir Joshua that he felt the time had now arrived when he should make an effort to make his own way in the world. He had won the great man's confidence, and, when the parting came, it was one mingled with regrets on both sides. The pupil had acquired a great reverence for Sir Joshua, and, to the end of his days, the veneration which he held for the master's memory was such, that he would enter into wordy and stormy combat with any one who attempted to speak either in depreciation of his character as a man or of his talents as a painter. Sir Joshua Reynolds, there can be little doubt, had hoped that after his decease his Life would be written by Burke, or by one of those

brilliant men of letters with whom he had enjoyed such a long and intimate intercourse. Little did he think, on that May morning, as he watched the retreating figure of his favourite pupil, that the day would ever come when an exhaustive account of his life and work would be published by that young man whom he had befriended on the threshold of his career! But so it happened; and, when the master had been laid in the tomb, within the hallowed walls of St. Paul's, it was James Northcote, and not one of his former brilliant associates, who gave to the world the *Life and Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds*.

Northcote now returned to his native county, and commenced work there as a portrait-painter. He had no intention, however, of permanently settling in Devonshire. It was only to be the means to an end. He had resolved that, as soon as he could earn by his pencil the money requisite for travel and residence abroad, he would depart for Italy, and study there for himself in the Mecca of all art pilgrims, the immortal works of the old masters. This resolve seems to have become known to some of his fellow-townsmen, and it was suggested among themselves that a public subscription should be opened to enable him to fulfil the object of his desire. The news of this kindly suggestion came to the ears of the struggling painter, but he strongly discountenanced it, and the scheme of raising the money in that way had to be abandoned. The visit

to Italy was to be an experiment on his part, he said, and he would stand or fall by it.

Northcote was soon in the midst of a good run of employment. The knowledge that he had been working for several years under the critical eye of Sir Joshua Reynolds was one reason, no doubt, which brought many sitters to his little painting-room. Executing his portraits in profile, he was able to paint with great expedition. Ere twelve months had passed, he had saved, by virtue of his resolute industry and his careful mode of living, a sum of four hundred pounds.

In March, 1777, he again left his native town, and now departed on the pilgrimage upon which his heart had been set so long. Embarking at Brighthelmstone—the old name for Brighton—and accompanied by a certain Manly, whose destination was Marseilles, he crossed over to France. He stayed a few days in the district of the French capital, and one day, at Versailles, he caught a momentary glance of Marie Antoinette, as she passed through an ante-room on her way to dinner. He was much amused at the sight of some old ladies-of-honour, who came toddling after the Queen in a half-run, and nearly out of breath in their endeavour to keep up with her. The hapless Marie Antoinette was then in the zenith of her beauty and splendour. He afterwards said that he should never forget how she crossed that chamber in her great

hoop. It was but for an instant ; she went through the room with such a sweep from one corner to the other, that he almost felt he had seen a vision.

At Lyons, Manly arranged with a man who had charge of some kind of vehicle and was going to Italy, that he should take Northcote along with him as a passenger. He bargained with the fellow, settled everything regarding the journey, and the manner in which he would receive his pay on the safe arrival of Northcote at Genoa. The two friends now bade good-bye, and Northcote, unable to speak any language other than his own, commenced his long and hazardous journey. The driver of the vehicle was faithful to his trust, and, though they encountered a terrific thunderstorm as they crossed the Alps, they arrived at their destination without mishap or adventure of any kind. "We did not know a word of each other's language," says Northcote, "and we had not one syllable of conversation during the whole of that journey. But the man took care of me as if I had been an infant ; indeed, he saw me so helpless from my want of knowing his language, that he actually treated me as if I had been a child ; he almost nursed me. I was totally in his power ; he might have robbed and murdered me with little fear of detection, but he was faithful to his charge in a manner I never witnessed either before or since."

On the twenty-third of May, about three o'clock

in the morning, the white moon hanging over Rome like a lamp and bathing with mellow radiance and silver light the great, sleeping city, Northcote, weary and tired, and fast asleep in the rough vehicle which had conveyed him thither, was quietly and safely brought into the desired haven of all his dreams. From the days of boyhood, his best thoughts and warmest hopes had been turned towards that garden of art, that home of rich and glorious treasures, which are the heritage of an age now long gone by. We may well imagine the joy which filled the dauntless heart of him, the triumph which he felt, as he stood, at last, in the streets of the far-famed city of the seven hills. It soon became his chief delight in Rome to visit the Vatican. Within the lofty halls and chambers of the most extensive palace in the world, he never wearied of standing before the works of the old masters ; and, oftentimes, as he stood there alone, reverently contemplating the handiwork of Raphael and of Michael Angelo, it was only the strange shadows of evening and the gathering gloom of nightfall that would compel the young disciple to leave the silent galleries, for the noise and bustle of the world without. He studied, too, in out-of-the-way churches, which were little frequented, and where he had discovered specimens of art well worth his particular attention, and in so doing he learned many a valuable lesson. He also

engaged himself in copying those special parts of portraits which he judged would afford him the most valuable help in his future work.

Time was wearing on, his resources were becoming very limited, when, fortunately for his purse, he began to be employed by the dealers in the city to paint on commission.

His stay in Italy extended over a period of three years. In the month of May, 1780, his savings all but gone, Northcote departed for his native country. He visited on his way home the collections of the Dutch and Flemish schools. The young Englishman did not leave Italy without honours. He was elected a member of the Imperial Academy at Florence; and, in return for the compliment, he executed, and presented to that body, a portrait of himself, which they hung among those of distinguished artists that adorn the walls of the Florentine Gallery. He was likewise appointed a member of the ancient Etruscan Academy of Cortona, and also of the Accademia dei Forti of Rome.

Upon his return to England, Northcote proceeded immediately to Devonshire, and resumed his work there as a portrait-painter. A few months afterwards, however—in 1781—he went up to London, and permanently settled there. Five years later, Alderman Boydell, with the object of giving encouragement to English painters, conceived the idea

of the Shakespeare Gallery. He offered Northcote several commissions to paint historical pictures for that gallery. The artist was now in his fortieth year. He had always been of a highly imaginative nature, and gladly accepted the welcome proposal, feeling assured that the golden opportunity had come at last, and that he was now on the royal road to both fame and fortune.

The first two pictures which he painted for Boydell's Gallery were *The Young Princes murdered in the Tower*, and *The Meeting of the Young Princes*. These great works immediately attracted public attention. Soon after their production, the Royal Academy recognised the ability of the artist by making him an Associate of their body, and, but a few months later—in February, 1787—the now-rising painter was elected a Royal Academician. Continuing diligently at work for the Shakespeare Gallery, Northcote soon produced two other works, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Death of Mortimer*. Then, in 1795, he exhibited in the same gallery *The Burial of the Young Princes in the Tower*, which was followed in succession by *King Edward IV. and his Queen, Rutland and his Tutor, Prince Arthur and Hubert, and King Richard II. and Bolingbroke*. It will thus be seen that he painted no fewer than nine pictures for the Shakespeare Gallery; and it is an interesting fact to record that, upon the sale of Boydell's collection, none of the works realised

as much money as did the works of Northcote, and his great rival, Opie.

The painter had now achieved considerable fame. Engravings from his works were to be seen in all parts of the kingdom. He was, indeed, reaping, at last, the full fruits of those struggles and arduous labours of his earlier years. He had made a great—though probably not an enduring—name for himself in the world of art. He was certainly one of the most diligent men of his time. It is said that the total number of his works cannot be less than two thousand. During the years 1773 and 1831—a period of fifty-eight years—he exhibited no fewer than two hundred and twenty-nine pictures in the Royal Academy, twenty-two at the British Institution, and fifteen at the Suffolk Street Gallery.

But diligent as was Northcote in the particular path of life to which he had been called, he also claims some distinction as an author. To the *Artist*, a periodical commenced in the early part of the nineteenth century, he contributed seven papers directly connected with his profession. He likewise contributed to the *Fine Arts of the British School*, a biographical sketch of his old master, which, however, in 1813, he expanded into a quarto volume, *Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds; comprising Original Anecdotes of many distinguished Persons, his Contemporaries, and a Brief Analysis*

of his *Discourses*. Two years later, a Supplement to this work was published, followed, in 1819, by a second edition, in octavo, with portraits and other plates. He further published, in 1828, *One Hundred Fables, Original and Selected*, which was illustrated with two hundred and eighty engravings on wood from his own designs; and five editions of this work were ultimately called for. Northcote, at his death, left manuscript material for a second series of *One Hundred Fables*, and this, in accordance with the directions in his will, was published in 1833, a second edition having to be issued twelve months afterwards. The last literary task which he was able to accomplish was one to which he had devoted many years of laborious study; this was the *Life of Titian, with Anecdotes of the Distinguished Persons of his Time*, and the work was published in 1830, when the venerable painter was in his eighty-fourth year.

But, though Northcote was a famous artist, and a painstaking author, he claims greater attention by reason of his having been a great critic and a brilliant talker. When William Hazlitt published a series of papers in the *New Monthly Magazine*, recording the intercourse which had taken place between himself and Northcote, it was at once recognised that the latter was a gifted, if somewhat cynical, conversationalist of a high order. Four years later—in 1830—the papers were collected





JAMES WARD

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE POSSESSION OF L. FLETCHER, ESQ., F.R.S.

and issued in the form of a volume, with the omission, however, of certain personalities that should never have been allowed to see the light.<sup>1</sup> It is, perhaps, chiefly in the capacity of a great conversationalist that Northcote's name will go down to posterity, rather than for any merit which he displayed either as author or painter.

There was one other than Hazlitt, however, who enjoyed friendly intercourse and conversations with Northcote, and for a long period of years, but who, unlike that able man of letters, never gave publicity to them. This intimate of Northcote's was James Ward, a Westmoreland man. Born in the hamlet of Oddendale, in that county, and in the month of June, 1784, Ward showed early signs of a love for drawing and painting. His efforts, in due course of time, were encouraged by those around him, and he finally took up his employment as an artist. At the age of five-and-twenty, he departed from his native place, and settled in London. He took up his lodgings in Cecil Street, and commenced regularly attending the schools of

<sup>1</sup> John Ruskin, in the year 1886, alluded to the volume in question as "a piece of literary work which remains classical to this day and is indeed the best piece of literary criticism founded on the principles of Sir Joshua's school." And he further said, with the Ward manuscripts in his possession, and, doubtless, influencing his mind, "In memory of the quiet old man . . . and in most true sense of their value, I hope to reprint the parts of the Conversations which I think he [Northcote] would have wished to be preserved."—*Præterita*, vol. i. pp. 393 and 395.

the Academy. It would appear that, prior to his arrival in London, he had directed most of his attention to landscape. He had resided but a short time, however, in the metropolis, when he commenced to make successful efforts in portraiture. It is quite evident that he acquired considerable skill in portrait-painting, as we find that after three years' residence in London, he was receiving commissions for portraits from different parts of the country, and was receiving what was in those days handsome remuneration for his work.

We must not dwell here, however, on Ward's success or achievements as an artist, but upon the attachment which was formed between himself and James Northcote one spring day in 1810—a friendship that was only brought to a close twenty-one years later by the death of Northcote in the summer of the year 1831.

Among Ward's earliest friends in London was a young artist who was, in later years, to become a Royal Academician and one of the most distinguished members of his profession—John Jackson. There was much in common between Ward and Jackson; they were nearly the same age, and both were North-countrymen. Jackson was on intimate terms with Northcote, and he so delighted to hear him talk, that he frequently offered himself as a model, for no other reason than to be able to listen to the remarks which fell from the lips of

the eloquent painter. It became his habit to regale Ward with incidents concerning Northcote and his mode of life, to recur to the conversations, and it became his wont to repeat many of the painter's sayings as being extremely original and interesting. A great desire to become acquainted with Northcote stole over Ward's mind, and this feeling was strengthened when he saw, soon afterwards, a large historical picture which that painter had exhibited in the Royal Academy. This work, *Argyll visited, while asleep in prison, by his Chief Enemy*, made a great impression on the public mind. The picture represents the Earl of Argyll, as he lies fast asleep in prison an hour before his execution. A letter which the Earl has written to his Countess lies open beside him. His deadly enemy—the President of the Council—is entering the cell, and is attended by the Governor of the Prison. The latter holds a bunch of keys in one hand, and with the other he points to the sleeping nobleman, while the President seems greatly chagrined and conscience-struck at seeing his victim enjoying such sweet repose. Through the grated windows, your eye rests, at some distance, on the scaffold; some of the attendants are already mustered there in readiness to take part in the dreadful tragedy. Ward remarked to his friend Jackson that he was almost unable to tear himself away from the great picture, and the latter then confided that he himself had

lain for several days on a mattress in Northcote's studio, as the model for the sleeping Argyll. The President of the Council had been painted from Northcote's own head, as seen in a looking-glass, and the gaoler from Sebastian Grandi, the Italian, whom Sir Joshua Reynolds brought with him from Italy and employed as his colour-grinder.

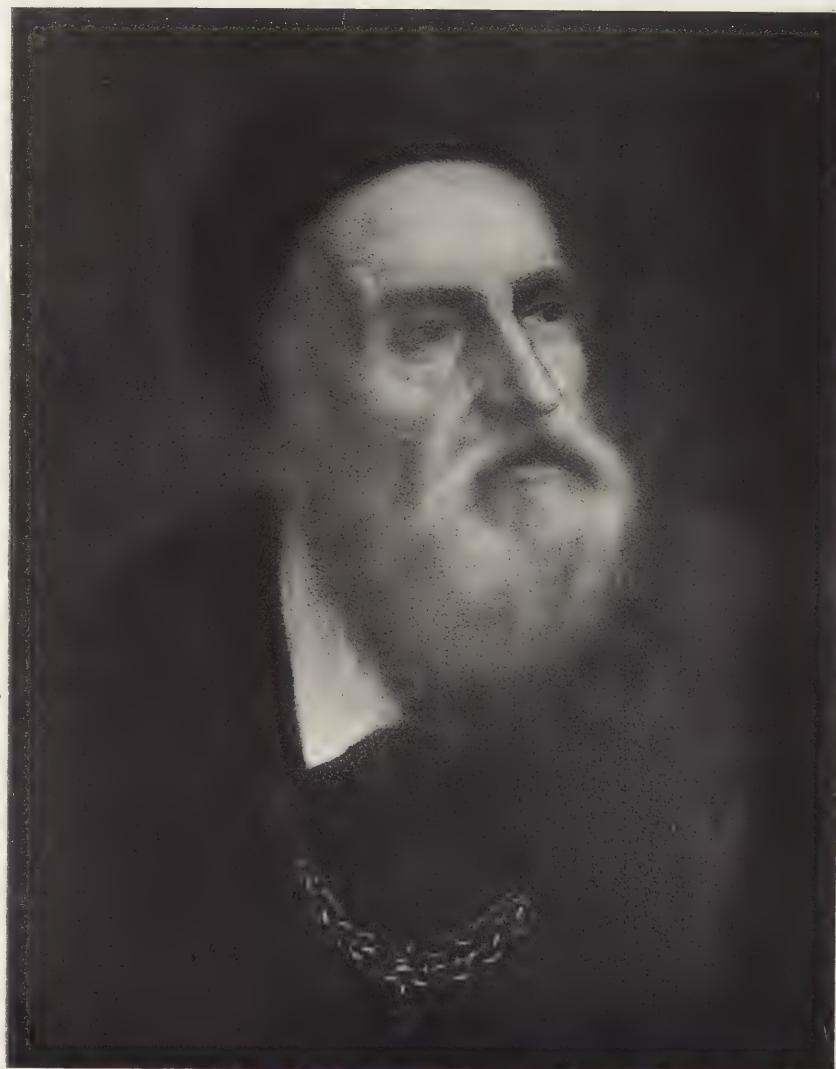
One May morning in the year 1810, the two young artists arrived at Northcote's residence in Argyll Street. Ward, unaware of the humility of the man who had achieved such considerable fame, experienced some amount of diffidence as his friend Jackson conducted him through two spacious rooms, upon whose walls hung large historical pictures and whole-length portraits reaching from floor to ceiling, and lesser portraits placed tier above tier, into the presence of the mind that had produced them. Upon entering the little studio in which the painter was working, he saw before him the small and spare, almost diminutive, figure of Northcote, but forgot all his physical shortcomings, when he looked upon the intelligent face, and met the keen and penetrating glance, of the famous man.

At this time, Ward was but in his twenty-sixth year, and Northcote was nearly forty years his senior. Notwithstanding, however, this great disparity in their years, the acquaintance thus begun through the instrumentality of John Jackson gradually ripened into a warm friendship; and the visits

of the young Westmoreland man were much encouraged by the great painter. Ward soon discovered that what he had heard relative to the great conversational powers of Northcote had not been exaggerated, and, from the first day of their acquaintance, he seems to have been in the habit of recording the substance of what the painter had been saying. He had recorded the conversations for upwards of thirteen years ere he revealed the fact to his friend Northcote, who, though considerably surprised, made no demur. "So long as you record nothing but the truth," said the latter, "I have no right to complain, for if I talk foolishly I must pay for it. Lord! I am such a fool! I say such bitter things, and I speak so from passion; I shall never have any discretion! Dr. Johnson said, 'He that talks much must often talk foolishly,'—and that must be my apology." Such was the regard and estimation in which he held the eccentric Northcote, that Ward continued the recording of their intercourse for some eight years afterwards, until, indeed, death beckoned away for ever his venerable friend, and the voice to which he had listened so long could be heard no more.

With regard to Northcote's conversational powers, he spoke with force and eloquence on many subjects. One of his chief delights was to speak of Italy. He would give vivid accounts of its scenery, praise its climate, and dwell on the gentle manner of its in-

habitants. He never grew weary of speaking of the sojourn, which, as a young man, he had made in Rome ; when he was grown old, his enthusiasm was greater rather than less, and he loved to dwell on it. The bright and continual round of gorgeous processions in the streets of Rome ; the warm complexions and the picturesque costumes of the people ; the numerous and splendid churches, filled with the fine works of religious art, and open to the poorest of the poor from morn till eve ;—these were the undying memories of those early Italian days, and when James Northcote chose to speak of them, there was joy in the hearts of those who had the privilege of listening to him. He was, however, at his best, perhaps, when he dwelt on the old masters ; he would then speak with fire and enthusiasm on the glories of Raphael, of Titian, and of Michael Angelo. And Ward, upon such occasions, has oftentimes left the painter's presence with his imagination so kindled by the old man eloquent, that, as he has wended his way homewards along the prosaic London streets, with their long, monotonous line of red brick houses, he has seen nothing save the golden skies and the sapphire mountains of Titian. “I had almost as soon hear him,” declared Hazlitt, speaking of Northcote, “talk of Titian's pictures (which he does with tears in his eyes, and looking just like them) as see the originals, and I had rather hear him talk of Sir Joshua's than see them. . . . He does not



TITIAN

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE



resemble a modern Englishman, but puts one in mind of a Roman Cardinal or a Spanish Inquisitor. I never ate or drank with Northcote, but I have lived on his conversation with undiminished relish ever since I can remember ;—and when I leave it, I come out into the streets with feelings lighter and more ethereal than I have at any other time.”

But, if James Northcote, when he dilated on the old masters, was seen at his best, he was unquestionably seen at his worst when tempted—as he frequently was—to indulge in bitter personalities and express himself in strong and extravagant terms. It was this failing on his part which gave that wretched satirist, Wolcot (Peter Pindar), the opportunity, in one of his odes, to stigmatise him as “that walking thumb-bottle of *aqua fortis*,” which was an obvious allusion both to the diminutive stature of the famous painter and to his habit of saying bitter things. Northcote was impulsive ; he would indulge in personalities in the heat of the moment, and regret his indiscretion, with all sincerity, soon afterwards. There was, in all probability, little of real cynicism down in the heart of him. He was scarcely a cynic. The remembrance of having made an indiscreet attack would—as one who knew him has said—rob him of sleep ; and we cannot read the expressive letter which the painter addressed to the father of John Ruskin,<sup>1</sup> regarding the then recently

<sup>1</sup> *Præterita*, vol. i. p. 394.

published *Conversations*, without feeling that it was indited by a man whose heart was sore within him at the thought of having caused pain to any one.

Much, however, will be forgiven in a man who himself was one of the most simple and unassuming characters of his time. Constable, who knew Northcote well, often spoke of his genuine simplicity of mind and habits, and once declared that he had never known another instance of a man living so long in the midst of London, so totally uninfluenced, as was Northcote, by the habits and customs around him ; he considered him to be as unsophisticated in his tastes and manners as if he had dwelt all his days on the summit of Mont Blanc. He was, indeed, a most natural man, and had an abhorrence of shams, and a great repugnance towards all manner of affectation. "I daresay it may be right," he once observed, in his characteristic way, "to hang up murderers ; I say nothing against it. But there is one class of criminals I would hang at all events without mercy, and that is all who are guilty of affectation ; they are arrant cheats, and ought to be put away from the face of the earth."

Northcote, too, was a high-minded man, and possessed of an independent spirit which characterised all his actions throughout the whole of his long life. He would suffer neither insult nor injury from any one, however exalted his station might be, without making severe retaliation ; and several incidents

might be recounted in illustration of this trait in his character. One of these incidents—as related by Cunningham—will bear repetition here. When Master Betty had made his appearance on a London stage, and had convulsed the metropolis by virtue of his extreme youth and skilful acting, it was decided by certain members of the nobility that the young prodigy must have his portrait painted. Their choice fell upon Northcote as the painter who must be commissioned to execute the work. During the progress of the portrait, the painter's studio was daily visited not only by his own friends, but by noblemen and titled ladies, who were enamoured of the boy-actor and were desirous of seeing the different stages of his picture. One day, a more distinguished visitor, attended by some of the wits of the town, walked into the studio—it was no other than the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William IV. Northcote was attired in his usual blue-and-white cotton gown, and all eyes were upon him as he progressed with his work. At length, the Duke, who was in a jocular mood, stepped behind the painter, took hold of the cotton gown by the collar, and gently lifted it. Northcote looked severe, and frowned at the Prince, whereupon the latter touched the grey hairs of the old man, saying, "You don't devote too much time to the toilet, I perceive!" The painter's wrath was now kindled. He turned his expressive eyes on the royal visitor, and ad-

monished him. "Sir," he said, "I never allow any one to take personal liberties with me; you are the first who ever presumed to do so; and I beg your Royal Highness to recollect that I am in my own house." There was an awkward silence; the Prince stood rebuked. A few moments later, he left the studio, only to find, upon his arrival at the street door, that rain was falling, and that his carriage had not arrived. He borrowed an umbrella from Northcote's sister, and then took his departure. The next morning, when Northcote was working quietly alone, somebody knocked gently at the studio door and entered the room. It was the Duke of Clarence. "Mr. Northcote," said the Prince, "I am come to return your sister's umbrella; I brought it myself that I might have an opportunity of saying that yesterday, I thoughtlessly took an unbecoming liberty with you, which you properly resented. I really am angry with myself, and I hope you will forgive me, and think no more of it." When Northcote mentioned the unpleasant incident to a friend, he was asked what he said to the Prince in reply. "Say!" he exclaimed, "what could I say? I only bowed;—he might see what I felt. I could, at that moment, have sacrificed my life for him; such a prince is worthy to be a king!"

James Northcote was—as we have already indicated—a believer in, and assuredly a fine example of, the gospel of work. Although he attained an

age many years beyond the allotted span of man's life, he laboured on, with pen and pencil, to the last. He held that many persons who were grown old in years lost their best faculties sooner than they would have done, if they had sufficiently exercised, instead of neglected, them. "They lay themselves by far too soon," he used to say; and the aged painter meant what he said. He seems to have had a dread of dying by inches—as he used to express it—like Sir Joshua Reynolds did. He wondered why the Litany of the Church of England makes us pray to be delivered from sudden death; and once observed that, for his part, if he thought it right to pray at all on that subject, he should pray to be sent out of the world by a death as sudden as possible, as a great mark of Divine favour. With thoughts such as these, the body of the old man grew feebler, and the mind more strong, day by day. His remarkable career was now drawing to a close. Happy and eventful had been those years which he had spent in the famous studio, following his own beloved vocation, and enjoying the intercourse and the intellectual combats with those numerous friends, men eminent in art, in letters, and in various walks of life—men of different religious beliefs and of all shades of opinion—who delighted to forgather there within its walls. It is not strange that, in the evening of his life, he clung with a strong and abiding affection to the little

chamber which was so dear to his heart, so dear in its old associations, so rich in its memories of the days that were past. Were God, he said, to leave him to select his own heaven, content would he be to occupy that little painting-room, with a continuance of the happiness he had experienced there,—"even for ever." At length, the final summons came, and it found him in harness—as he had wished—and working almost to the last moment of his life.

On the thirteenth of July, 1831, at his residence in Argyll Place, and having all but attained his eighty-sixth year, James Northcote, as if in sleep, breathed his last. He was buried beside his friend Cosway, in the vault under the New Church of St. Marylebone, hard by the scene of his long labours. And thus passed away one who called Reynolds both master and friend; who saw, and spoke with, Johnson and Goldsmith, and the orator Burke; and yet who lived to paint the portrait of him who only seemed to be among us but yesterday, John Ruskin.

The strict frugality which he had practised in his everyday life, and the quiet, unostentatious habits which he ever rigidly observed, caused it to be whispered abroad, during his lifetime, that Northcote was something of a miser. He easily succeeded in deceiving—like many another such man—those who did not know him best; for generous was his true

nature, and sympathetic the great heart of him, behind all his cynical and caustic talk. When he had been laid away in his final resting-place, when he was removed far beyond reach of all human gratitude, it was found that he had bequeathed the sum of one hundred pounds each to some twenty of his personal friends. He had never married. He bequeathed the bulk of his personal estate—which was valued at five-and-twenty thousand pounds—to the devoted sister who had cheered him with her loving companionship through many long years of storm and sunshine. Nor were his servants forgotten—two domestics, who had served their gifted master faithfully and well, receiving twelve hundred and fifteen hundred pounds respectively.

Not long after Northcote's death, James Ward left the metropolis, and returned to his native county. He survived his famous friend for nearly twenty years. On the nineteenth of December, 1850, he was interred within the quiet churchyard of Crosby Ravensworth, in the midst of the Westmoreland fells—among his own people—and almost within the shadow of the little hamlet where he had been born sixty-six years before.

## CHAPTER II

Northcote's studio—He tells of his early struggles in London—His warning to would-be artists—Eminent artists should assist young beginners—His faith in his own ultimate success—Disliked painting away from his London home—He tells an anecdote of a visit to the West of England.

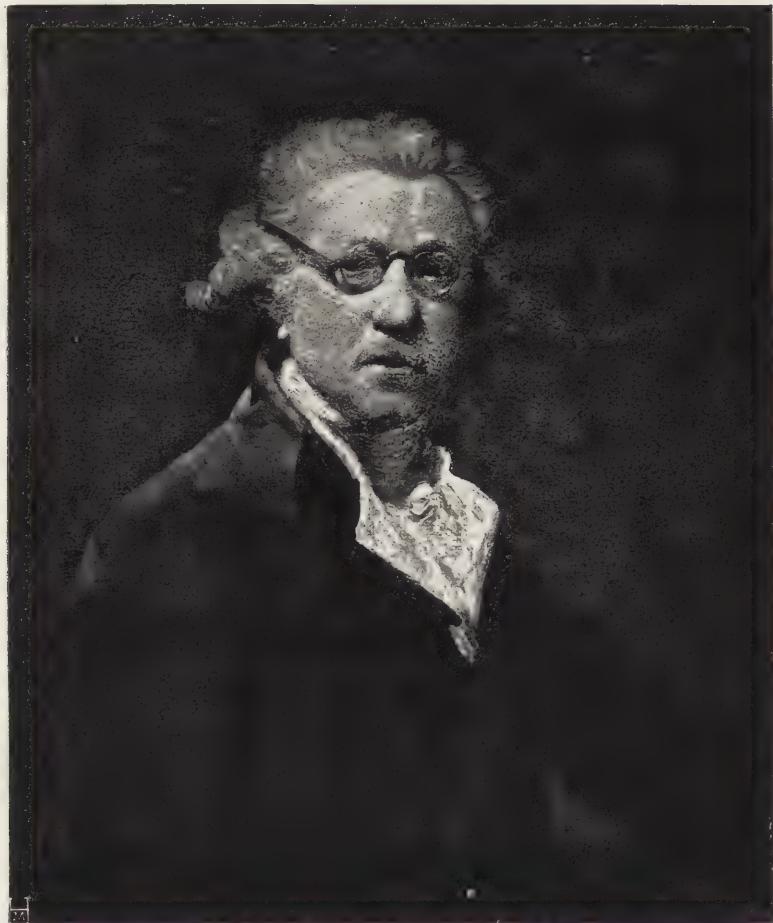
JAMES NORTHCOTE lived in the metropolis, his residence in 1810 being No. 39 Argyll Street. Within a little back room at the head of the stairs, many years' intercourse between the famous painter and James Ward took place. The door on the stairs was but seldom opened, and visitors would usually approach the studio through two other, and much larger, rooms, upon the walls of which hung Northcote's solemn-looking pictures. The passing through these chambers made them feel, upon entering the little painting-room itself, that it was a snug and delightful retreat. The light found access into the studio through a high window, the lower part of which was covered by a curtain, and this arrangement combined the two qualities of cheerfulness and warmth, with the total exclusion of the world without. Upon the walls of this little inner room were several pictures of which Northcote was particularly proud—among them were two or three fine heads by Sir Joshua Reynolds, a beautiful

portrait by Sir Peter Lely, and a fine copy of Vandyke's.

Northcote would sometimes speak to Ward of his early struggles in London, and told how, when he first arrived in the city, he was compelled to colour little prints to enable him to earn his subsistence.

"I had but a little money with me," said he, "which I had been saving from my earnings for some time down at Plymouth, and I was dreadfully afraid of spending it, lest I should be obliged to go home again. I accordingly cast in my mind how I might earn a little, in order to prolong my stay in London. I had always been fond of drawing birds from nature, and having brought with me some of these drawings, I one day went into a print shop and offered some of them for sale, saying to the man that I could supply him with more if he could sell such things. He looked at them for some time and seemed to like them, but observed that they must take me considerable time in doing, and he feared he could not sell them for anything adequate, at the same time showing me some prints of his such as children buy. He asked me if I could colour these, as these he had a sale for, being able to sell them cheap. I could easily do that, I said, and agreed with him immediately, taking a bundle of them home with me to my lodgings. I remember, I used to rise at three o'clock in the mornings—for it was summer then—and by breakfast-time, I found,

I could colour as many of these prints as would pay my expenses for the day ;—so that I had all the rest of my time to go about seeing pictures or to improve myself in painting at home, and I thus kept my stock of money from wasting, which was very delightful to me. However, this state of things didn't last long, for I had brought a letter of introduction to Sir Joshua from an old gentleman who used to notice me in the country—that old gentleman there ! (*Northcote pointed to a fine, though early, painting of Sir Joshua's that hung over the door of his painting-room.*) Sir Joshua was so occupied that he couldn't see me at first when I called, but when he did, he wished to see some of my paintings, which I took to him when I went to his house again. To my utter astonishment he seemed pleased with them, and praised them ! Now, I had met with nothing but contempt at home, for whatever I did there was despised to the uttermost, and you may suppose how delighted I was to hear my things praised by Sir Joshua—a man whom I had looked upon for some time as being something more than human. He proposed to me to become one of his pupils, saying to me, ‘ If you will come and do as the rest of them do, I shall be very glad.’ This proposal, you may be sure, I instantly accepted, and I lived at his table and lodged at his house—I did whatever he set me to do, such as painting the hands and figures and draperies for his different



SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, P.R.A.

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY



portraits, as he had little time to do anything besides the heads and fixing the attitudes himself. Oh! how delightful it was to me beyond all description, being so far beyond what I had dared to hope for !

“ I remained in Sir Joshua’s house five years ; four years was supposed to be the time for those of us who received board and lodging for our labours, but I was determined not to pinch my master, and thus I remained an extra year.”

Northcote, speaking of Haydon one day, observed that every true artist should be actuated in his work by two great motives ;—first, an ambition to excel, and, secondly, a love for the art.

“ Now Haydon,” said he, “ appears to have enough of the first, but little of the second quality. It was the same with Hussey, Barry, and a great many others. This is the reason why many throw up the art in disgust ; they have nothing to support them but the world’s applause, and when that doesn’t come, it is all over with them. I have known many young men become painters in order to escape the drudgery of what they fancied to be mean employments, and to become what they chose to call *gentlemen*, and not from any real love for art itself. They read the Lives of eminently successful painters, such as Rubens, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and never think of the hundreds of unsuccessful ones, many of whom have died in garrets and workhouses. Now, the Lives of these ought to

be written also, and put into their hands ; they would then know better what they were undertaking, for it is a cruel thing they should be deluded in this way. I assure you, it makes my heart sick when I see fine young men come to me from the country, full of health and good spirits, who have friends able to embark them in safe and profitable employments, in which case they might marry and enjoy the comforts of society ;—it makes my heart ache when I look at them and reflect what they must undergo in order to succeed in the art, and how very few of them will succeed after all. Young men have not a fair chance, for they are encouraged by ignorant though well-meaning friends, when they ought to be warned and cautioned. If they can scribble and draw a little whilst at school—and almost any boy can do this who has a mind to try, and many do it out of pure idleness to avoid lessons and exercises—they are called geniuses forsooth ! They become flattered by being noticed by persons of influence in their neighbourhood—who want to gain the credit of being the first to discover embryo talent—till nothing will serve but they must become *great painters*, without, perhaps, possessing a single requisite for that purpose. The Lives of highly-successful painters are put into their hands—rare instances of good fortune in the world—till they become fired, not with a love of art itself, but with

the wealth and splendour which are to flow from it. They dream of being courted by kings and emperors, as Titian was ; of being sent on foreign embassies, like Rubens ; and of entertaining at their tables all that is splendid in rank and talent, like Sir Joshua did. But what a delusion is all this ! For those few who became so distinguished, there were hundreds that arrived at no distinction at all. Now, young men should know all this *before* they make their choice ;—that is what I contend for. But, having once made his choice, a man must make up his mind to suffer all sorts of privations ; and, to succeed here in London, he must be content to accept any employment in the art, however mean it may be. Ah ! Sir Joshua himself used to have things brought to him to do that ground his very gizzard, such as copying bad pictures that he could scarcely bear to look upon ; but he refused nothing, all was accepted, and some of these led to fine connections and the best employment afterwards. The real enjoyments of the painter ought to be a love for the study, and a contempt for common amusements such as are indulged in by the people around us.

“ Artists of eminence should not withhold their experience from the rising generation of painters. They should even lend them pictures to copy ; it’s their duty, whenever they can do it, to point out the students’ faults, and to lead their minds to

excellence. That knowledge which we ourselves have received from others we ought to hand down to those who are to come after us, if the art is worth keeping up. Young men often bring their works to me for inspection, and I always feel it my bounden duty to look at them, and to lend them any pictures or engravings which they may wish to borrow of me. I give them my honest opinion and advice ; heaven knows, this is frequently anything but pleasant to me, for they often bring me things that almost make me sick. I know the seeing of faulty work is a risky thing, and I myself never feel far enough from the edge of the precipice, for the greatest fault I see in a picture seems, at least, to get hold of my own skirts. But it is really our duty to put ourselves to some inconvenience in assisting young artists ; the world expects it from us. We should act towards them as our predecessors acted towards us. It is perhaps on this account that I have always thought it right to lend young painters pictures to copy, and to look at their productions, however distasteful that might be. There is one thing, however, I never could prevail on myself to do, and that is, to take pupils. I could never bear to think of the responsibility with regard to their moral conduct. Now, Sir Joshua had no scruples of this kind, which, I confess, always appeared to me very shocking. Moreover, I don't see what can be taught to pupils, and

I advise those who come to me, not to place themselves under any master, but to go and draw among the other young men in the British Museum and at the Royal Academy, where emulation will more than supply the want of a master. There are many subordinate situations in the art, of course, in which a man may make a livelihood, though he might not become eminent or famous. For my own part, I never allowed myself to look at anything short of the great end. As for the mere making of a livelihood I never had any fears on that head, though my family used to tell me it was impossible for me to succeed. I allow that, in regard to portrait-painting, there is certainly an immense risk, for to succeed in that department of the art a man must not only be able to paint well, but to paint well under certain disadvantages and hindrances. Your sitters, instead of assisting you, are often bent only on their own amusement or self-indulgence, and plague you by reason of their total ignorance of what they ought to do. Besides, their friends will often interfere, and try to put you out of your own feelings—and, in short, will tease and torment you in every possible way: he is a good painter therefore, who not only can paint finely, but paint finely in spite of all hindrances."

One day, Northcote directed Ward's attention to an unfinished portrait of Sir Francis Burdett, which was on the easel, and explained that he had been

painting it in the Tower of London for Mr. Fawkes, of Farnley. He remarked that he made it a rule never to go out of his house to paint portraits, but he had been strongly urged to make an exception in this case, for it had been pointed out to him that the circumstance of the portrait being painted in the Tower, whilst Sir Francis was suffering in the cause of his country, would add greatly both to its interest and value. They then spoke of a certain artist who was spending much of his time in painting portraits in the houses of country gentlemen.

“Ah!” exclaimed Northcote, “he will find that will be his ruin if he does not take care. Why, I might have spent the whole of my time in that way if I had chosen. There is nothing so amusing to persons of leisure as having a painter in the house who is painting their portraits. They will pamper you with every luxury and indulgence, so that in time you will become totally unfit for anything else. The worst of it is that they will not allow you a moment’s time for study; every moment of your spare time must be spent in contributing to their amusement. Again and again, I have been urged by persons to go down to their country seats, and they have assured me how comfortable they would make me, but I have very seldom accepted their invitations, for I really dared not do it. Now, to be sure, a young man who has not become much known may increase his connections by going now

and again to their houses, as he will get introduced to many persons by so doing ; but he must be very much on his guard, otherwise they will be sure to ruin him, for their habits are totally at variance with anything like application or study.

"I remember once going down into the country, however, to paint a portrait, and I will tell you an anecdote about it. A gentleman once called upon me and urged me to go down with him to his place in the West of England to paint a portrait of his father. His father was an old man, and could not possibly come up to town. I stood out against the suggestion for a long while, but he urged me again and again, and declared he would regard it as a misfortune if he could not have his father's portrait painted by me. At last, I complied with his request, and journeyed to his country home. I longed to be back again in London, however, and took care to do no more to the portrait than was absolutely necessary. I remember, I carefully packed up the picture, and, upon taking my seat on the London coach, placed it behind my back to keep it from being injured. There were two or three gentlemen who were passengers along with me, and we talked away very pleasantly for a while, till, at length, the picture getting very warm with my back being against it began to send out an odd, sickly smell. I perceived the smell for some time, but of course made no observation, for, alas ! I knew it would be still

worse the farther we travelled. At last, first one gentleman began to snuff up his nose, and then another, and they wondered, they said, what it could be that was causing such a disagreeable smell. Various causes were assigned for it, till, at last, we concluded that it must be *fish*! We all agreed, too, how very abominable it was on the part of guards of coaches for them to take such nasty things along with them, to the annoyance of the passengers. We went on in this way till we arrived in Piccadilly, where I got down, taking my picture with me. But I couldn't go away quietly, I remember, for as soon as I felt myself fairly out of the coach, I turned round to the passengers, and said, 'Gentlemen! 'twas *this* that smelled!' They all roared at me, and declared I should not take my seat again, as I was too bad for anything, whereupon I said, 'No, I won't, for I am going no farther!'"

## CHAPTER III

Northcote in praise of Italy—On the decay of art in that country—The stillness of the Vatican—His adventure there—Speaks of certain Popes—Prince Charles at Rome.

NORTHCOTE and Ward had many interesting talks on Italy. There was no subject, indeed, upon which the great painter would speak with such interest and pleasure as upon that. He had not forgotten how, in the days now long gone by, he had spent in that country some of the happiest and most profitable years of his life, and his friends would listen spellbound whilst, with flashing eye and eloquent tongue, he would recall memories of his sojourn there, and descant, with the devotion of a true disciple, on the glories of Raphael and of Titian. If Ward, indeed, found the painter in a depressed or melancholy frame of mind, the subject of Italy had only to be introduced into the conversation for the mental transformation to be effected, and for Northcote, full of visions, to become a young man once again.

“It was one gloomy, wet, cold morning in the latter part of the year,” records Ward, “that I found him on his knees, rummaging in a huge, dusty portfolio filled with all sorts of odds-and-ends. He

looked up at me from a dark corner of his outer room, and scarcely spoke when I wished him 'Good-morning.' He hunted on a while longer in silence, and then, heaving a sigh, exclaimed, 'Lord! what a wretched country this is to live in, especially for a painter! The English will never paint such durable pictures as the Italians, for the climate is so damp, that it is almost like painting under water, and the means we have recourse to for making pictures dry has always a tendency to ruin them. Here, too, is so little daylight! The Spanish Ambassador might well say to that friend of his, who was going home to Spain and wished to know if he had any commands, 'Yes, give my compliments to the sun, for 'tis a long time since I saw him!' One has to work like a *devil* to get even the common necessities of life, everything is so taxed and so dear; and there is such a dampness in the air that it's almost like painting under water. One's pictures will never dry, without forcing them by the use of deleterious substances, which destroy their durability. Oh! 'tis so different in Italy! There, there is such a splendour of light and such a dryness in the air, that there is no occasion to make use of drying substances at all, for the colours dry any way in that country. Besides, when our pictures are done, there is scarcely light to see them by in this country; and, not only this, people here cover their windows half-way down with

drapery, so that nine days out of ten you can only just perceive that there is a picture at all, and you have very little idea what it is intended to represent. Now, pictures painted in Italy suffer still more from the want of light when brought into this country; why, they look nothing more than a mass of blackness with a few spots of light scattered upon them, whereas in Italy, where the windows are large and lofty, and the rooms filled with light, you see into the darkest masses of shadow—and oh! they look so rich and so transparent. Italy is, indeed, a delightful country for a painter! London is a dreadful place to live in after you have been abroad. There is so much misery and suffering that one cannot go out without being shocked and made melancholy, for it stares one in the face whichever way one goes, especially in those parts which are inhabited by the labouring classes. Now, the lower classes in Italy, of course, undergo sufferings as well, but it is a different thing. Their climate is fine; very little clothing is sufficient for them, and still less fuel, and as to houses, why! almost anything will do that shelters them from the showers and the nightly dews. Their habits are simple, and there is little or no drunkenness among them, for the air is so buoyant and the skies so bright, that they require no artificial stimulants to make them cheerful. Besides, there is such a continual round

of processions and outdoor amusements that the lower classes in Italy are not driven into pot-houses as they are here. They don't labour half so hard as they do in this country, and they are the strongest and finest figures that can be seen, whereas here they are — many of them — half-crippled, and look as if they were half-starved into the bargain."

Ward now mentioned the name of a certain painter, and remarked that he was greatly admired in Rome.

"Admired in Rome!" exclaimed Northcote; "that goes for little, for everything, however wretched, is admired there. Things that would be scouted in any provincial town here in England would be cried up as wonders in Rome; the art there is in the most wretched state."

"This is strange," observed Ward, "as they possess the finest specimens in the world, and ought, therefore, to be foremost in excellence."

"Yes," continued Northcote, "but when those specimens are of so high a kind as to be supposed out of reach of all competition, they have, I believe, a depressing effect, instead of proving an incitement to excellence. Sir Joshua used to say, 'If you begin to make examples, you may excuse anything.' It is exemplified in the case of Rome; the great works are supposed to be out of reach, excuses are made, and almost everything is excused—at least it was

so when I was there, and I cannot learn that it is any better now. I can't give you any conception of the state of art in Rome—nothing can be worse, it is at its lowest ebb. There is nothing so dreadful as the dregs of art! The infancy of art may be dry and hard and formal, and it has always considerable truth and a strong savour of nature; but it is dreadful to contemplate the decay of art. I remember the works of men being cried up in Rome that would not be able to draw the smallest attention here in England. Gavin Hamilton had been praised as superior to Raphael, but what things his works were when I came to see them! I remember Sir Joshua went to see a picture of Hamilton's, which had been lauded to the skies in Rome. When he came home, I said to him, 'Well, did you find it very fine?' 'Oh,' said he, in his quiet way, 'I really didn't know what to say, and got away as fast as I could.' There was Durno, too—a famous man indeed! Boydell employed him for his Shakespeare Gallery, as they must have *something from Rome*; but you never saw such things as he sent over! One of them was *Falstaff in the clothes-basket* and the other *Falstaff and his recruits*. In fact, the art no longer exists in Italy—it is a thing gone by—indeed, they don't want it, as their churches are full of pictures, and there is no demand for new ones."

"How still you are in your little painting-room!"

observed Ward ; "what a delightful escape is this from the noise and racket of London, though we are in the midst of it!"

"Oh ! I couldn't bear it," replied Northcote, "unless it was still. Stillness has a mighty charm for me ; my sister likes to sit in a room next the street, which I cannot bear. I well remember the stillness of the Vatican with great delight, for I used to work hours there without hearing so much as a footstep. As I was anxious to make the most of my time at the Vatican, the Keeper indulged my love for the art by allowing me to remain there after the hour of closing. I used to lock the doors myself and take the keys to him after I had done. I often thus remained, surrounded by the grand and solemn works of Raphael, until it was quite dusk. The place would become so awful in the twilight that I almost became frightened ; I remember the terrible sound of the keys in the great locks, and how it echoed through the spacious, silent rooms, as I turned them after me. Oh ! what a place it is, the rooms are innumerable ! I once was tempted, I remember, whilst resting from painting, to saunter on from room to room, and, without being aware of it, I went round the whole palace, and arrived at the inhabited part, which I fancied I was going further away from. Upon opening a door, I actually found myself, to my great dismay, in a room where were congregated some of the Pope's guards ! Now,

they immediately seized me by the collar, and, all speaking at the same time, demanded who I was, and what I wanted there. I told them all about it as soon as I had breath, and explained to them how I happened to come there. They looked at one another with consternation, exclaiming, 'Good G—d! our Lord might have been assassinated!' I thought to myself that if he was in no greater danger than from me, he was very safe. They allowed me to go, but afterwards the doors giving access to the inhabited part of the palace were kept locked. I subsequently heard that I had penetrated to the very ante-chamber of the Pope. Had this incident occurred in some countries, I should have been sent to prison, and perhaps tortured, but everything is done so gently there in Rome that it is a delightful place to live in."

Ward was surprised to hear Northcote speak in this manner of Rome. He had always imagined it to be the headquarters of bigotry and intolerance, and now expressed his wonder regarding what his friend had just said.

"There is a great deal of intolerance in Spain and Portugal," resumed Northcote, "but in Rome they seem to run into the other extreme of laxity and indifference. They seem to consider the Pope in the light of a sovereign, and little more; lampoons and pasquinades against him and the cardinals are frequently stuck up in certain places, without any

great pains being taken to find out the authors—at least, it was so when I was there. To be sure, the lower orders are more superstitious than the others, as they are in other places as well as in Rome. They make a great fuss to get the Pope's blessing as he passes along the streets, so that he is obliged to keep moving his hands, as if in the act of conveying it, all the time he is out, and even when talking to those who are with him; but this suffices, for they go cheerfully on their way afterwards, and think no more about it. If you conduct yourself with decency during their ceremonies, no further notice is taken of you. Here in England, you imagine the King and Queen far more awful personages down in the North than we do here in London, I will venture to say! 'Tis just the same in the case of the Pope and the cardinals;—they are held in far more veneration in distant parts, where they are only read of, or are mentioned with profound veneration by the priests, than they are in Rome, where they can be seen almost every day, and are found to be only as other men are."

Northcote, being well acquainted with the history of the different Popes, often interested Ward by relating anecdotes about them. Sixtus V. was a frequent topic of conversation. Northcote considered him a really great man, as he—the son of a poor cowherd—had raised himself to the pontifical chair by virtue of his talents alone. The painter,

however, was unable to forbear relating to Ward the anecdote regarding how that dignitary, by pretending to be excessively weak and ill, was supposed to have resorted to stratagem to get himself elected Pope.

“Upon meeting with any of the other cardinals,” related Northcote, “he used to cough a considerable time before he would speak to them, and, indeed, it was considered quite a nuisance to meet the old Cardinal Montalto. Two great parties in the conclave, neither of which could carry the election—as they were both of equal strength—compromised the matter by electing the *sick* old Cardinal, thinking he would soon die. To their great surprise and dismay, however, the newly-elected Pope threw away his crutches, stepped out with a firm, manly step, and joined in the *Te Deum* with a loud and hearty voice. Upon being asked how he became so suddenly upright and strong, he said that he had been bending down in search of the keys of Saint Peter, but, having found them, it was no longer necessary to stoop.<sup>1</sup> His sister, hearing of his great elevation, came to Rome, splendidly attired, and waited upon him. He pretended not to know her.

<sup>1</sup>“The various artifices employed by Cardinal Montalto to obtain the papal tiara have been described much and often. The affected humility of his deportment; how he tottered along leaning on his stick, bent to the earth, and coughing at every step: but to him who reflects, no evidence will be requisite to prove that in all this there is little truth.”—Leopold Ranke’s *History of the Popes*, vol. i. p. 337.

His sister, he said, was a poor person, and meanly clad. She presented herself to him again, however, in a little while, and attired in the humblest way. He now showed her great kindness, saying that as it belonged to him to *make* princesses, he would not have one already made. This Pope excommunicated Queen Elizabeth—but he had the highest admiration for her energetic character, and he once declared that if he had married her, and she had borne a son, the offspring would have become a second Alexander the Great."

Northcote also talked about the *Protestant* Pope, Clement XIV., and the *Dandy* Pope, Pius VI., the former gaining the appellation by virtue of his mild and tolerant spirit, and the latter by reason of his personal vanity, "for he powdered his hair, and so admired his own legs, that he caused the pontifical robe to be tucked up on one side, so that one of his legs, at least, might be seen."

Whilst he was studying at Rome, Northcote frequently saw the second Pretender, the hapless Prince Charles Edward Stuart.

"The Prince had a box at the theatre, surmounted by the Royal Arms of England, and I used to take my seat in the pit immediately beneath it, for I liked to be near it. He wore a silk embroidered coat, and, oh! I remember, I used to feel so hurt and ashamed at seeing a little

hole at the elbow, as he leaned his arm over the side of the box. His brother—the Cardinal York—lived in great state when I was there, though I have been told that he afterwards lost everything by the invasion of the French, and was obliged to accept a pension from the King (George III.) for his support. But the style he lived in when I was there was such that, I have been told, he would have made a poor exchange had he become King of England, which indeed he did style himself, after his brother's death, by the name of Henry IX. I remember meeting him in a narrow lane on the outskirts of Rome; he was in a most sumptuous equipage, and driving at a rapid rate. I took off my hat and stood aside as he passed, and he looked graciously at me. I have since been told that had I called out, 'God bless your Royal Highness! I am an Englishman!' he would have stopped his carriage and wept over me, as he has been known to do to some others. I always thought it affecting to see those two brothers."

## CHAPTER IV

Northcote on Titian, Raphael, Vandyke, Frans Hals, Rubens, and  
Paul Veronese.

“A FEW days ago,” said Northcote, “I went to a picture dealer’s, and there saw a portrait by Titian. It was a boy in the dress of a cardinal, and consequently of high rank, but who he was cannot now be known. I advise you strongly to go and see it, for nothing can be finer. The expression is that of gentleness carried even to humility, delightful to look at, and the painting of it equally excellent, so strongly pronounced in every part, and yet as soft as possible: it appeared as if painted in half-an-hour. I am never tired of looking at Titian’s pictures; they possess such extreme breadth, which to me is so delightful a quality. In my opinion there never will, to the end of time, arise a portrait-painter superior to Titian. Next to him in this kind of excellence is Raphael. There is this difference between Raphael and Titian; Raphael, with all his excellence, possessed the utmost gentleness; it was as if he had said, ‘If another person can do better, *I* have no objections.’ But Titian was a man who would keep down every



RAPHAEL

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE



one else to the uttermost ; he was determined that the art should come in and go out with himself ; the expression in all the portraits of him told as much. When any stupendous work of antiquity remains with us—say a building or a bridge—the common people cannot account for it, and they say it was erected *by the devil*. Now I feel this same thing in regard to the works of Titian ;—they seem to me as if painted by a devil, or at any rate from inspiration ; I cannot account for them. Vandyke's things don't produce that effect upon me at all, for his portraits are like beautifully-executed models standing up in glass cases, such as are to be seen in Westminster Abbey. But Titian's have a frightful look of life about them, and it is this which astonishes me. Vandyke's portraits of course are beautiful, but they always look like pictures, being thinly painted and unsubstantial, whereas Titian's always look like realities, often frightfully so. I remember feeling this very strongly when I was at Florence. I was looking at the famous portrait of Cardinal Bentivoglio, which hung at that time alongside of one by Titian—that of the Cardinal Ippolito in Hungarian dress—and you have no idea how like a mere drawing Vandyke's looked to me when I cast my eyes from one to the other ; and yet it is one of Vandyke's most powerful works ! It suffered sadly from its powerful neighbour, and Vandyke would have felt this keenly if he had seen

it in the Palace Pitti under the circumstances that I did. But, then, nothing will stand against Titian! His qualities are such that there's no getting rid of them; in his worst pictures, or even in the worst copies of them, there is always something valuable, and would be even though engraved by a monkey. Now Frans Hals was a great painter; for truth of character, indeed, he was the greatest painter that ever existed. Sir Joshua had a portrait by him in his library, which Titian could not have surpassed. Hals made no beauties; his portraits are of people such as you meet with every day in the street. He was not a successful painter—his works were not ornamental—they did not move—they did not give all his sitters were whilst he saw them before him—but, what they did give, they gave with a truth that no man could surpass. I have sometimes said Titian was the greatest painter in the world, and take him all in all he was; he gave a solemn grandeur which is very fine indeed. But still, if I had wanted *an exact likeness* I should have preferred Frans Hals. I am afraid to think it, yet I cannot help thinking sometimes, that Titian was a mannerist, for his portraits, though identity itself in many respects, yet have all the same solemn air—they partake of his own sternness of character. Now to get *rid of self* is the great thing to be aimed at, and this, in my opinion, Titian did not quite manage to accomplish. Raphael managed it

better, but no man did it as well as Shakespeare, which makes the miraculous part of his character. Frans Hals possessed one great advantage over many other men ; his mechanical power was such that he was able to hit off a portrait on the instant ; he was able to shoot the bird flying—so to speak—with all its freshness about it, which Titian does not seem to have done.

“ Titian showed great skill in the painting of groups of portraits. It is extremely difficult to paint groups, where all the faces are to be well seen, and all in the light, too ; it is a most embarrassing thing to do. It appears to me that there is only one way of managing them, and that is, to make one mass of light, otherwise the picture will look like a check-board, as is commonly the case. Now, Titian, being steeped in all those qualities that make a picture, as addressed to the eye, could not fail here, and accordingly, in his famous *Cornaro family*, he has brought the boys' heads close together, like those of King William and Queen Mary on a shilling ; indeed, this picture, as a group of portraits, is perhaps the finest in the world, for it is turned into history. Another similar subject by Titian is that of the *Farnese family*, consisting of Pope Paul III. and his grandsons. I have just thought of Vandyke's *Pembroke family*. Now, Vandyke has done in this picture what none but an exquisite painter with great executive power could have done ;—he has thrown the heads of the principal

persons on the sort of throne, into half-tint, and done this without spoiling the colour, which has answered in regard to giving the necessary variety and preventing the check-board appearance that I mentioned just now. The three pictures which I have mentioned are, in my opinion, the only successful family groups that have ever been painted. Sir Joshua's *Marlborough family*, though fine in parts, is not successful in these respects ; he could never, indeed, put more than two figures together successfully. Titian and Sir Joshua were very great painters, but I think Titian was the greater workman, and that he had the greater mind ; he was beyond all reach. There were, of course, circumstances that favoured him beyond what fell to Sir Joshua ; for instance, the dress of the times in which he lived conveys no familiar or common associations to us now ; in fact, it was very fine and simple, especially that of young men, which was very rich ; the dress of the old men of that period was like that of our dignified ones at the present day, that of aldermen for instance. Another circumstance which favoured Titian was the rich brown complexion of his sitters, which is much easier to paint than ours ; most of Titian's men, too, wore beards, which add amazingly to their grandeur. I was down the other day at the Institution in Pall Mall, and saw there a portrait by Titian of a man with his hand on a dog's head ; it is only quite a common specimen of Titian, and covered with

dirt into the bargain, but, oh! there is such an individuality about the thing! You come away from it quite satisfied that it is a likeness, and have as good an idea of the man portrayed there, as if you had seen him walking in the street. The best Vandyke there, is a portrait of a man in armour, but how great the difference! You cannot compare it with the other. I think Titian's power of giving his great effects arose from his seeing his object all at once, whereas Vandyke appears to me to have seen his object too much by piecemeal. Vandyke's hands are beautifully and exquisitely painted, and so are his pieces of drapery; there is no skulking in his pictures, no slurring over things, as is the case with many men of the present day; but, after all, the different parts of his figures don't come together, as they do in the works of Titian. Titian's breadth, too, is very fine—indeed, nothing can exceed it. There is, you know, a spurious breadth, which looks flat and poor—a result produced by leaving out detail—and Sir Joshua Reynolds sometimes approached this fault. The reason why so many painters lack breadth is because they look too much at the parts unconnected with the whole. A proper detail added to breadth gives richness of effect. Nature has higher finish than Denner, but then the breadth is always preserved. Yet, that breadth which is palpable and apparent is wrong, for the breadth of nature, far from being palpable, is difficult

to see. Now, in this copy after Titian (*Northcote produced a copy of a portrait by Titian of a gentleman in a black dress, which had been painted by Hoare, of Bath*), there appears no art at all, but everything about it is simple, broad, and natural, so much so that some persons would not be able to see its merit, which consists in the propriety of the attitude, arrangement of the hands, background, and indeed everything about it. It is to the glory of Titian that, however badly he may be copied, he cannot be got rid of, whereas a bad copy from Vandyke is good for nothing. It might be considered high treason on my part, but I say this, that I consider Vandyke was deficient in breadth. His works, however, are full of gentleness, elegance, exquisite drawing, and colour, and they are my delight."

"To obtain the breadth you speak of, do you suggest the method of laying in all the objects broad and flat, and then working up the details?" asked Ward.

"It does not matter how it comes; true breadth can only be got at by a close examination of nature, and the acquirement of a proper feeling for it. I said just now that there is a spurious breadth. I well remember Sir Joshua speaking to me of Opie's pictures, and asking me why he left out detail so much, and I replied, 'For the sake of breadth, I suppose,' to which remark Sir Joshua rejoined, 'Oh, if he merely makes one side of his faces

black and the other white, he may always have breadth.' "

"The works of Titian," said Ward, "are full of exquisite beauties ; how greatly in love with his art he must have been ! "

"Oh, yes," continued Northcote ; "that is evident from the great age to which he lived ; his good fortune, and the great respect and honours he enjoyed, no doubt contributed to this. And yet he appears to have been terribly jealous of everything like rivalry, and he drove Tintoretto from his house from this motive. I have been praising Titian, but Raphael, I think, was perhaps the greatest painter on earth, and I will tell you why. It is the *mental* power, after all, and not *executive* power, that must occupy the first place in our minds when we consider the reputation of any painter, and on this account Raphael must be esteemed the greatest painter that ever lived, for he cannot claim this position under the head of executive power. Some people certainly talk of his drawing, but I cannot agree with them ; in short, I think Raphael could not draw, at least not to compare with his mental qualities. I have a great veneration for Shakespeare, who, in representing all earthly passions, was certainly unrivalled, but I do not think he was as great a man as Raphael. Raphael made a shoot beyond any effort of Shakespeare's ! Shakespeare was longer on the wing, but Raphael's was the higher

flight. *Saint Paul preaching at Athens* went beyond anything that Shakespeare did—it was a higher kind of flight! Titian was great, but his works were more addressed to the eye, and Raphael's to the highest faculties of the mind. Titian's famous work, the *Peter Martyr*, had always in my eyes something of the theatrical in it, especially the attitude of the monk running away. Now, Raphael could never be taxed with this, for he never pushed an attitude too far, and knew exactly where to stop ; he never could be caught in anything like affectation. I know the *Peter Martyr* has been called a faultless picture, and to find fault with it is like speaking blasphemy. The landscape is, of course, exquisite, having such a look of desolation as is unparalleled. But, still, the work does not possess the quality of the Roman school—a grave simplicity addressed to the *mind*. 'Tis the mental, and not the executive, part of his work, upon which the reputation of Sir Joshua Reynolds chiefly rests. We have a great deal of executive power among us to-day—a great deal of good workmanship which really astonishes me ; but it is the *Guido feeling* that we lack—the delicacies and elegances and refinements of the art, for in these we are greatly deficient."

"The junior painters whom I am in the habit of seeing," said Ward, "seldom talk of anything but good or bad workmanship."



ST. PAUL PREACHING AT ATHENS

FROM THE CARTOON BY RAPHAEL IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM



“‘Tis the same at all times,’ continued Northcote. “Sir Joshua used to say the same thing of his contemporaries. I remember when I was painting my diploma picture for the Royal Academy, I asked his opinion concerning the subject, and if he thought it would do. ‘Yes, anything will do,’ said he, ‘if it is only *well painted*; it signifies little what your subject is or how it is treated, for it is intended for the painters, and *they* will look at nothing but execution.’ Yes, it is the mental part of his work which is Sir Joshua’s great quality, and which is responsible for his grace and variety. He sometimes, of course, showed fine execution, but he cannot take his stand on that head. To be sure, even he met with subjects that were too much for him—the famous Mrs. Robinson, for instance, who was an extreme beauty. I only saw her once, and that was when she was very ill, and had to be borne upstairs by two men, but even then I thought her remarkably beautiful. Now I think no man could have painted Mrs. Robinson but Sir Godfrey Kneller; he perhaps might have succeeded, for he had a higher feeling for beauty than any painter that ever lived. It was quite beyond Sir Joshua’s power to do it, for his portraits of her were complete failures.”

“It is curious,” said Northcote, a little later, “how much alike are the portraits of Raphael and Titian; they are so much alike, indeed, that it’s difficult to

ascertain to which of them some belong. One said to be by Raphael can be found to be Titian's by the chronology of the sitter. Raphael never saw the works of Titian, for Titian did not come to Rome till after Raphael's death. Titian would have been a fine painter even if he had never seen a picture by any other man, for such was the force of his genius; his manner was quite different from that of any who had gone before him. Oh, how grand his works are! I remember his *Interior of the Council Chamber at Venice*, and how delighted I was when I saw it. It seemed so extremely realistic to me, the perspective so perfectly true, and to have such character and dignity; I liked it ten times better than Parmigiano's *Orpheus*, which I think was never meant to be nature."

Ward now mentioned Rubens, and, alluding to that master's *Chapeau de Paille*, observed that it was the opinion of some people that the work had been injured by cleaning.

"No such thing!" declared Northcote; "the remark only took its rise from a superstitious feeling concerning the excellence of Rubens, so that too much was expected from it. The fact is, Rubens was but a man, after all, and had many faults; he was not by any means a model in portrait-painting. His great excellence lay in his being able to work out such mighty compositions as he did with such ability as regards the whole,



“CHAPEAU DE PAILLE”

FROM THE PAINTING BY RUBENS IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY



and such splendour of colour. But I have always felt, on looking at Rubens' works, that he made his forms too circular—at least they are more so than I can see in nature—and that his eyes are goggle-eyes. The *Chapeau de Paille* has an immense power of colour, and is finer in other respects than I expected to see it, especially in that expression of shrinking modesty in the mouth, and the holding down of the head, as if the lady had been harassed through being so much looked at by the painter;—now this is the finest touch of nature in it!"

A visitor now produced some sketches which he had recently made from well-known works, and among them were Paul Veronese's *Marriage at Cana*, and Rubens' *Coronation Scene*.

"What power," exclaimed Northcote, after looking at the first-mentioned sketch for some time, "to be able to manage such a vast composition as this! You see it is the repose—a large mass of light—in the sky that does the business for it; make it bustling and the thing is ruined. You see, also, that he is careful to preserve *the great shapes*; you may trace the table behind all the figures in front of it; he has taken care of that. And how fine he is in regard to distinctness—you see he excels even Rubens there!"

The sketch having been removed some distance from him, Northcote exclaimed, "What an effect!"

Now, I cannot at this distance from it see at all what the picture is, yet it is something delightful to the eye; I can see it is something worth the trouble of examining." The painter now examined the sketch of the *Coronation Scene*. "How excessively fine is this!" said he. "Rubens was indeed a great man; he could manage the strongest colours and knew what he was about. His *Coronation Scene* is a thing which of its kind can never be surpassed, and yet we know that it cannot be at all like what the real scene would be; that could not have been painted. But Rubens gave a fine, picturesque thing, which serves to represent the Coronation. The figure placing the crown on the Queen's head is fine, for the action is good; see how delicately he holds the crown! And the woman turning her back towards the spectator is fine, too; how finely the figure is carried off by the immensity of the drapery he has given her, and by which means it is made elegant! The two huge cardinals doing nothing—the count standing so gracefully with his back to the spectator—the two rough shepherds' dogs—these appear odd when introduced into the foreground of such a scene, but they were all brought in for picturesque effect. It was certainly a bold thing to do, and it could have been managed otherwise.

Rubens must have spent a happy life, I think, for he seems to have had great animal spirit, and



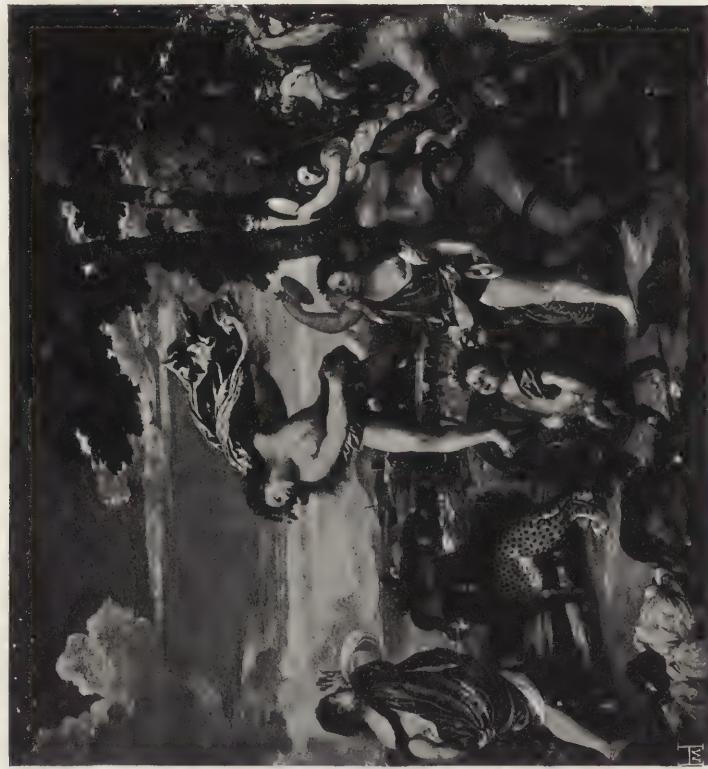
RUBENS

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE



didn't harass himself too much with the mental part of his art, otherwise he would not have been able to caricature as he did. His manner of painting hair was certainly very odd; in many instances it seems more like a wig made of brass wire than hair. But he was indeed a mighty man, and I really think his perception of animals has never been approached by any one on earth. I remember that, when I returned from Italy, I couldn't bear Rubens' pictures; they appeared to me then what they have frequently been called—*the shambles*—but I can now admire Rubens as much as any man. He is a dangerous model to imitate, however, and I have known painters ruined by him; it requires a strong mind to study Rubens with safety. I have seen instances of silly imitations of that great painter, instances where nosegays were awkwardly stuck in ladies' hands merely for the sake of colour. That sort of thing is disgusting to me, and this hunting after violent effects of colour is one of the vices of English painters. I'm afraid the English school will be put out by it. Foster was carried away by it, and it will claim more victims than I like to think of. Real, fine colouring consists in transparency, delicacy and harmony, and not in gaudy colours; but some of these men set their palette with all the violent colours they can heap upon it, and then fancy they can make their picture in that way. The best models for chaste colouring are, in my

opinion, the Venetian, and not the Flemish, painters. Opie's pictures are chaste in colour, but there seems to be no one now to guide young painters in this respect, except Wilkie, for he keeps within bounds. It is nature, and not the painter's palette, that ought to be looked at in colouring, and I'm sorry many men look more at the latter. No! Rubens is a dangerous model! It is a fine sight to see a vessel carrying all sail and sweeping before the wind, but, then, the vessel must be qualified for it by its size and weight—transfer the same quantity of sail to a small, light vessel, and you upset her in a moment! Rubens only followed the bent of his nature—he was a mighty genius, and could play on the very edge of the precipice, for it was his own native place; any other man must inevitably fall over it. Rubens' flesh was painted on a fine principle that was derived from his study of Titian's works, which he saw when they were fresh, and it is in the reflected lights and adjuncts where he brings out his gorgeous colour. Now, Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*—which is in the possession of Hamlet, the jeweller—is not one of that great master's judicious pictures, for the general effect is not good, but very weak. But the great glory of it is its colouring; the landscape part is inexpressibly exquisite, indeed all Titian's landscapes are so. His feeling for history was not of the highest order, but he was the finest portrait and landscape painter in the



BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

FROM THE PAINTING BY TITIAN, NOW IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY



world. Titian's landscape backgrounds are always proper for the occasion ; Sir Joshua's are not always so, but are sometimes very inappropriate. That in the picture I have just mentioned is a representation of Spanish climate, and is therefore more brilliant than we ever see in our misty atmosphere. The work may be called a wanton display of executive power, as far beyond common nature as the feats of a rope-dancer beyond walking ; we may be sure a rope-dancer can walk, therefore a painter who can do work like this, is safe in all inferior attempts. Oh ! Titian's colouring was wonderful ; to such a degree, indeed, that no man can tell how it was done. The old masters painted on a system —nobody can doubt that—but, as Sir Joshua used to say, 'the recipe is now lost.' "

## CHAPTER V

Careless finishing the vice of the English school—In praise of Sir Joshua Reynolds—“The art of painting does not receive sufficient encouragement in England”—Sir Joshua not to be servilely copied—His peculiar excellence can never come again—He is compared with Vandyke—“The very ghosts of Sir Joshua’s portraits remain fine”—His skill in painting the ladies’ head-dresses of his time—On his great industry—His portraits of children—He was superior to ill-natured criticism.

THE two painters were discussing, one morning, the want of care in the execution of certain pictures, when Northcote exclaimed: “I see more and more that careless finishing is the vice of the English school, and it is most ruinous to the younger painters. Sir Joshua led to it by his example, and yet his advice to young beginners was to copy the German method, that is, to paint carefully, and to make out every part clearly and distinctly. Sir Joshua had too much to do, and was obliged to paint in a way that didn’t satisfy himself. Painting is indeed a difficult thing; don’t go about it too much as if it were easy! Labour from needy people as models, and investigate every part with the greatest care. In the earliest portraits of Titian, and in all those of Raphael, you will find no *slobbering*, but every part highly finished, and the very hairs of the eyebrows—I may almost say—counted.”

"Is not high finish," asked Ward, "generally destructive of breadth?"

"That is the finish of weak minds; the finish *I* mean must have the broad masses, as well as the minuteness, of nature. Now Titian's early portraits, though apparently finished as if with a needle's point, yet have all the breadth and effect of nature, and when seen from any distance whatever. I can assure you that this clever mode of copying nature is the best security against mannerism, which will be sure to creep in if any shorter methods are practised. Mannerism is what Sir Joshua was always condemning, yet he himself can't be acquitted of it, especially in his way of painting the eyebrows, nose, etc. It certainly arose from his great practice, which compelled him to paint quickly, whereas Titian had not only his subjects to sit much longer, but he received higher prices, and was thus enabled to give more time to his portraits. Vandyke, however, is the safest model for students; his attitudes, to be sure, are stiff, and his hands hang from the end of the arms like those of a doll; but we must remember that his pupils put in the hands and the drapery, whereas Titian's whole attitude was taken from nature. Yet Vandyke's mode of painting was careful and true; some of his portraits, indeed, after he had much to do, were slight, but they were never careless or slobbering. When he had such a degree of elegance it is hard to find fault with him, yet,

still, I think there is a want of masses, a want of seeing the whole at once—it isn't so much the truth of nature in general, as in bits, that Vandyke is famous for. However, on the whole, he steered well through the difficulties of the art, and I always admired the exquisite manner in which he painted the English complexion—the most difficult thing in the world in point of colour. Titian probably would have done it still finer, but then those he painted—the warm, brown complexions of hot countries—are certainly easier to manage. Sir Joshua's colouring, of course, was very beautiful, but his female complexions are not so true as Vandyke's—they partake too much of the complexion of dolls. Sir Joshua's portraits of old Sharpe, and Sterne, and a multitude of others, are, of course, excessively fine. Vandyke's *Lord Strafford* is also very fine, but it wants that certain air of verity which Sir Joshua was generally so famous for. Students should study correctness of drawing and careful finish, for it is the only road that leads to excellence. A more unfinished manner—the result of old age, or of great practice, or where the essences of nature are finely felt, as in the works of Velasquez—might be excused, but it ought never to be aimed at or intended; it must not be from choice, indeed, but must be the offspring of necessity.

“You mentioned breadth just now. I consider Edwin Landseer's pictures want breadth. Breadth

is one of the characteristics of a great mind ; it is seldom to be acquired where there is not a natural disposition towards it. Minute finish is the substitute of little minds for this fine quality, for a little mind sees but little at a time. Sir Joshua used to say, 'Don't look at an eye only, but look at the whole face !' A great mind takes in a large view of things, not only in art, but on every other subject. High finishing, of course, is popular because it addresses itself to the capacities of the great bulk of mankind, but the union of that with breadth is perfection."

"I consider," remarked Ward, "that Velasquez was famous for breadth ; and the works of Wilson, the landscape-painter, have appeared to me to possess it in a high degree."

"I quite agree with you," continued Northcote, "but you must add Sir Joshua as an eminent instance. Vandyke in some degree wanted the quality. I am becoming more and more convinced that Sir Joshua, next to Titian, was the greatest portrait-painter that ever lived, for his works on the whole have such a striking individuality about them—and this is the very soul of portrait-painting after all. The art of painting does not receive sufficient encouragement in our country. If circumstances, for instance, were as favourable to historical painting in England as they have been in Italy, we should find even Raphael's works no longer talked about in the

manner they now are; for no people are so well qualified to shine in painting as the English, both from their strong sense of propriety, and their vast industry, which, indeed, will stop at nothing in the shape of difficulties. Now, if the borough interest here could be made to be as dependent on art as the Catholic religion has been in Italy, you would soon see my remark verified! But historic art cannot flourish here as things are at present. Look at Haydon, the historical painter! I have told him that it's impossible for him to get on in this country, let his merit be what it may. I have always told him this. I tell him that he is like an architect, who is qualifying to build cathedrals when no cathedrals are wanted."

"But Haydon," interrupted Ward, "tells me that, in time, he should be able to *create* a demand for historical pictures!"

"He will find it," continued Northcote, "a sad mistake, for in no age or country has historical painting ever been encouraged for its own sake, but always either as a source of power or profit—or as affording gratification to ostentation or self-love. Now, in Greece and Italy the first was the case—it became a source of power and profit both to the Heathen and Catholic priests, becoming an imposing part of their national religion. It was then safe, for it was sure to be encouraged. But the latter was the case in England, where our religion rejected it,

and our ostentation and vanity wouldn't go sufficient lengths for it. I tell you again that if historical painting could be made instrumental to the borough interest in Parliament, we should then have painters as fine as Raphael was; I have no doubt of this. It would flourish here in England, in such a case, as much as, and more than, it has ever done in any part of the world. By our great success in portrait-painting, we have shown what can be done where there is a demand for our exertions; no nation on earth can vie with us at the present day! Sir Joshua Reynolds had a very narrow escape of being the finest portrait-painter the world ever saw; as it is, he stands unquestionably among the greatest portrait-painters that any age or any country has produced."

"He must have been a true genius," suggested Ward, who had been reflecting how Northcote had actually worked under the eye of that great master, and was desirous of inducing his friend to be as reminiscent as possible about the world-famous portrait-painter.

"Now he was unquestionably a genius," continued Northcote, "but as a teacher he was the worst master possible. He had had no regular education himself, and could not even draw a hand, except as an object of sight. What he did was entirely from the force of his genius alone, and genius, you know, cannot be communicated. This

shows how ridiculous it is to think of becoming great merely by treading in another's footsteps. There are those at the present day who talk of painting like Raphael and Michael Angelo, but how foolish it all is! An historical painter to be as great as they were must be original, and therefore, totally unlike them, he will be only a copyist if he should strive to imitate them. There will probably rise up portrait-painters as great as Sir Joshua was, but then they won't be like him—they will be original, men who will look at nature for themselves."

A visitor ventured to remark that it would not be very useful, therefore, to copy Sir Joshua's pictures.

"Why, no," replied Northcote; "I don't see that anything can be learned by copying Sir Joshua, except colour. He had also, of course, a most exquisite balance of light and shade. To be sure, he may possibly inspire his copyists with something of his own mental feeling, but I do not know that it ever has been done."

They then spoke of the numerous students who were copying the Sir Joshuas that had been left to be studied at the British Gallery. Ward remarked that some of the students in question were learning to put in violent vermillion touches under the nostrils and in other places, and that he felt quite sure that they themselves never saw these things in nature.

"Now, if Sir Joshua," said Northcote, "could have known all this, he would have been humbled by it, especially to find the liberties which he took turned, as it were, into gospel. I remember that I myself once copied a head of Sir Joshua, and very pleased I was with one of those rich, reflected lights under the eyebrows, and which I carried still farther in my copy. When I showed that copy to Sir Joshua, he instantly found fault with it, exclaiming, 'I did it bad enough, but you have done it still worse!' I make no doubt that were he now living, he would say the same thing to all those who are copying his faults, and looking upon them as perfection, in the way they are doing. The only way to be safe is to do no more than you see in nature, for if you once allow yourself to exceed it, you will never know where to stop. Oh! all this imitating of Sir Joshua is quite in vain; his peculiar excellence can never come again; it was a part of himself, just as much so, indeed, as his figure was a part of himself. Something will probably come up which will weigh as heavy, but, still, it will be different from the excellence of Sir Joshua. They may just as well attempt to imitate the tone of his voice. His feeling for *character* was most intense; it was so great that many of his portraits look like visions of his sitters. I assure you that could visions of many of them be called up from the dead, they would come before us like Sir Joshua's

portraits of them ! Now, Vandyke's works, in some respects, are the finest paintings in the world ; they are exquisite in execution, and cleanness of colour, and are perhaps the best models to learn how to work from. But they lack the character which Sir Joshua gave to his works, and the airs and attitudes of Vandyke's sitters are not theirs, but his own. Sir Joshua has given an intensity of character to his portraits that has never been attained before. He has succeeded in giving such momentary action and expression as would have surprised both Titian and Vandyke could they have seen his works ; they painted hours, Sir Joshua moments. Yes, he certainly has a just claim to the title of *genius*, for he unquestionably added to the art qualities which it did not possess before. I remember going some time ago to see Lady De Grey's collection of pictures in St. James's Square. I was greatly pleased with the portraits by Vandyke which I saw there, but I recollect that, as I was coming downstairs, I suddenly caught a glance, through an open door, of Sir Joshua's portraits of Lord Grantham and his brothers, who are represented as playing with a dog. Good G—d ! how I was struck, for they seemed actually alive and in motion ! It was all over with Vandyke when I saw that picture, for it possessed a quality which Vandyke's portraits, finely executed though they were, certainly wanted.



VANDYKE

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE UFFIZI GALLERY, FLORENCE



Vandyke's portraits, indeed, look too much like the members of one family ; Sir Joshua's are more various ; and Titian carried this quality still further than he, for his portraits are as various as the people in the street. And how difficult it is to ruin Sir Joshua's pictures ! I remember seeing his portrait of the Earl of Carlisle—a whole-length, representing that nobleman walking down steps, and habited as a Knight of the Thistle. I saw it at Jackson's. It was in a shameful state ; it was cracked and faded from the varnishes and nostrums which Sir Joshua had made use of, and yet the picture had still all those qualities which Sir Joshua can never be without ;—it had grace, and simplicity, and beautiful arrangement. He forced his pictures out by such brilliant effects, that even the very ghosts of them remain fine, whereas a picture by Vandyke in such a state as that which I saw at Jackson's would certainly be done for. It is astonishing with how little apparent labour Sir Joshua frequently executed the different parts of his pictures. His execution was irregular, but when it was fine it was exquisite ; the cap in the girl feeding chickens, for instance, seems to have been done in a minute, and yet he couldn't have done it better had he spent months over it. He knew so well how to seize the essences of his objects ; his taste was exquisite. The sides of his figures never come out alike, but are finely varied, which is a thing

so teasing to inferior painters. He always brought in some accident which made them, like nature, perfectly various. He had, too, the art of making the most of untoward objects, such as the great powdered head-dresses worn by the ladies in his time; for when he was asked if they were not harassing to him to paint, he answered that they afforded him an opportunity for light and shade; in short, you might go to him dressed in as unpromising a manner as you would, and he bade defiance to you.

“He managed with so much skill the uncouth ladies’ head-dresses of his time, that I am tempted to think what fine things he would have done with the advantages which Lawrence now enjoys, who is fortunate in living in an age when the fashionable dress of the day is so favourable to the painter. Lawrence is beginning to complain of the large curls which are just coming into fashion, and the time is probably coming when his resources will be severely taxed in this respect. It has been said that Van-dyke had little to contend with in this way; but, when I compare his works with those of inferior painters of his own time, it appears to me that he has shown great skill in this very particular. . . . His portrait of Charles the First *on the white horse* has not a fellow in the world. The horse is not exactly like a horse, yet it is so beautifully delicate, and might be admitted into a drawing-room without

offence. The head of Charles is extremely fine, and it might almost serve as a model to paint the Saviour from."

"Sir Joshua," remarked Ward, "must have been a man of great industry!"

"He looked constantly to the goal before him," replied Northcote, "and suffered nothing to turn his attention from it; no pleasure, no feelings of any kind were allowed to stand in the way; this, indeed, has been the case with all great men, though perhaps in kings and nobles it makes a greater show than in men of inferior station. Resolute industry will do wonders, and the man who practises it will strike out new lights that he has never before so much as thought of. All professors, to achieve success in their callings, are obliged to practise incessantly. One of my neighbours plays the violin, and the continued scrapings of his bow constantly reach my ears;—unflagging industry is the only way for professional men to acquire facility in their respective arts. Sir Joshua was incessantly practising from hired models, and from children—beggar-children—and hundreds of times did he practise from his own head as he saw it in a looking-glass. The study of the art may be divided into two grand objects, the mental and the mechanical, or taste and power of hand. He was well endowed with the former, and his incessant practice from the models enabled him to

acquire that mechanical dexterity which made him so famous. When the children of the nobility were brought to him he was able to paint them quite rapidly. Oh! what grand rackets there used to be at Sir Joshua's when these children were with him! He used to romp and play with them, and talk to them in their own way ; and, whilst all this was going on, he actually snatched those exquisite touches of expression which make his portraits of children so captivating. Some men have an aptness of hand which is of great use in arts where manual dexterity is required. It was a beautiful sight to see Sir Joshua paint, for he did it with such a graceful facility. Some of his things, of course, sometimes turned out differently from what he had expected, but his annoyance was soon overcome, and he would allow no difficulty to stand in his way. I remember quite well his once painting a man and his wife in one posture, which cost him a great deal of trouble, and, after all, it was not fit to be seen ; but he was not the man to be discouraged, he set to work again, painted them in separate pictures, and with different attitudes, and they came out very fine. Some portrait-painters whom you and I know seem to have a difficulty in employing themselves, when they are not engaged with sitters, but this was never the case with Sir Joshua. He was busiest when not occupied with sitters ; it was then that he was pushing his abilities to the utmost ;

## REYNOLDS SUPERIOR TO CRITICISM 79

it was then, indeed, that he was conceiving and executing those things which have made his name so famous as a painter. Seldom did he take exercise ; and so closely was his day spent in his professional employment, that if by any chance he found himself in the street during the middle of the day, he felt ashamed, and thought everybody was looking at him.

“Great as was Sir Joshua’s merit, it did not prevent him from being attacked by ill-natured newspaper critics, but he was man enough not to be annoyed ; he was too much of a philosopher for that ; he looked to the end of the year—to the great result—and, besides, he was too much engrossed with what he was about. It was a maxim of his, that we should never be annoyed with trifles ; and he used to say that he had the power of withdrawing his mind from disagreeable things and fixing it on other subjects. He was, moreover, with a single exception, the only individual I ever knew who appeared to me to be superior to circumstances. Crowns of diamonds might have been set on his head without his seeming to feel the least difference ; difficulties and disappointments were received by him in the same manner, so that it might truly be said of him that he was indeed superior to circumstances. Mrs. Cosway was just the same. I knew her when she was in the greatest distress ; I knew her afterwards when she was in

high prosperity, and visited by the Prince of Wales, but at both periods her behaviour was exactly the same. Sir Joshua, particularly in the latter part of his life, was treated like a beauty, for he was so flattered and caressed. He was shown much homage. I well remember his servant telling me that he was always excited when he had to call out his master's name at receptions and such like; the people, he said, all turned round and stared so, upon hearing Sir Joshua's name announced, and they even made a lane for him to pass through, whereas when a duke or an earl was announced, few of the people took any notice. This shows us the respect and admiration which are paid to great and acknowledged talent, beyond what rank —mere rank alone—can never hope to claim."

## CHAPTER VI

The American form of government—Northcote in praise of Court life and society—Anecdote of Mrs. Siddons—On superstition—On Master Betty, the boy-actor—A word concerning Ireland's counterfeit play “Vortigern”—On poets and authors—“They are not the wisest or greatest of men who have written books”—On physical defects—Homer and Shakespeare compared.

THE conversation at Northcote's, one evening, turned on the American form of government, and one of the visitors was praising it very highly, when Northcote said, “Yes, there may be many things in it that are very well, but they want a Court! It's the Court that gives the finish, the tone of good manners to society. It is in Courts where men learn to suppress their selfish feelings, and though all this may be only a counterfeit, it serves to polish the manners of the people down to the lowest rank; it keeps up the semblance of virtue—it reminds men that there is such a thing.”

The visitor in question, at this point, burst into a derisive laugh, and exclaimed, “What! learn virtue in a Court!”

“Well, well,” continued Northcote, “you may laugh at me, but I can't give up my point. A set of strolling players may be very vicious in their conduct, you know, and yet may act a play which will have a good moral effect on those who witness

it. No, no ; the little ceremonies of society are not to be despised ; for instance, in letter-writing we say 'My dear Sir' to a person we perhaps know little of and can care little about, yet I am persuaded it has a good effect, as any man may know if he consults his own feelings. In short, let a government be ever so good, in my opinion it will be imperfect, if it hasn't a Court."

"If we may judge," remarked Ward, "from analogy, this liberty, this equality, which some men talk so much about, would totally destroy all the beauty of society. Judging from our own art, what would a picture be without a principal mass of light, a principal mass of shade, and—in short—a principal mass of everything ? No two lights must be of equal consequence ; no two masses of the same colour, of equal strength."

"Why, to be sure," continued Northcote, "a picture exemplifies the thing very well. Indeed, a picture painted on the principles of these men would not be looked at for an instant. You see this principle of variety runs through all nature, and makes it beautiful ; a mouse may as well complain that she hasn't got the bulk of an elephant, as a man of a low station complain that he hasn't been placed in a higher ! Besides, these dissatisfied men make a wrong estimate of what is good in life ; they never consider what a dear price the great pay for what appears so splendid in their

eyes; if they could change situations with them for three months they would, in most cases, be glad to return to their former stations, however humble they might be. Hazlitt sometimes storms at me, and rails against rank and station, but I tell him that it's envy that makes him talk so, and that he thinks of all the glory, and does not consider the inconveniences of high station. No, no; there must be difference in rank and station; there must be in all governments something despotic. In some countries, this despotism is in the king; in some, it is in the aristocracy. Here in England, it is in the *law*—the law of the land. The despotism of this invisible sovereign is more tolerable than any other; it is more easily submitted to by the people, for it comes upon all alike—the sovereign himself is obliged to submit to it."

"Stewardson," said Ward, "has been telling me a queer anecdote about Mrs. Siddons, and it was told him, he said, by Queen Caroline, whilst Princess of Wales, when he was painting her portrait a few years ago. Mrs. Siddons—the Princess told him—was once dining with her, and the actress sat at table in such solemn dignity, that the rest of the company were afraid of her. There was a long and awful silence, which, at length, was only broken by Mrs. Siddons herself, who, looking round at one of the servants, said, in her deep-toned manner, 'I will thank you for a glass of table beer!' Upon this, the

Princess burst into a fit of laughter, and the conversation among the company at once began to flow."

"Now I will venture to stake my existence," exclaimed Northcote, "that this is false! I know Mrs. Siddons better than to believe she would be guilty of such bad taste. But it is quite in unison with the mischievous wit of the Queen, and I have no doubt that the tale was her own invention. She felt mortified at Mrs. Siddons' stately manner, and at the company's treating her with that deference which she herself wished to receive from them; this story was invented, through revenge, to turn Mrs. Siddons into ridicule. The Queen's talent in that way was the cause of her own destruction, as is well known. It is almost beyond the power of human nature to forgive people when they ridicule you. It is well known that Queen Caroline ridiculed her husband, and others, in such a manner that they never forgave her. To be sure, both Mrs. Siddons and Kemble were stately and unamusing persons in company, and the deference I have sometimes seen paid them was wonderful. I once saw Mrs. Siddons sitting upon a sofa in great state—it was at Mrs. Weddell's—and many ladies of high rank approached in such a manner, that had they consulted their own feelings, without any regard to propriety, I am sure they would have gone on all fours. Now this comes, you know, under the head of superstition. The late Lord Boringdon, for instance, could never be



MRS. SIDDONS

FROM THE PAINTING BY THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A., IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY



brought to dine in company with Dr. Johnson or Goldsmith, and yet he sat cheek by jowl with a deeper observer than either of them, and that was Sir Joshua Reynolds. Sir Joshua had more contempt for mankind than either Johnson or Goldsmith, for they were always thinking more of themselves, and the parts they had to play, while Sir Joshua concealed *his* talent under the garb of mildness and childlike simplicity ; he listened, indeed, with such patient attention, that everyone thought he was admiring what was said. He was greatly afraid of being thought a wit, or possessing anything formidable in his disposition. I remember on some occasion, when it was stated in the newspapers that 'Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and *the other wits* were there,' he exclaimed, 'What do they mean by calling me a wit? I never was a wit in all my life !' and he seemed quite annoyed by it. He well knew that to make the world afraid of him would be ruinous to him in his profession. Though he kept so much company he had no boon companion—no one had his confidence—he was an isolated being. Indeed, no one could sympathise with him, and enter into his feelings with regard to that great love for art which filled his mind. But I mentioned superstition just now. It's wonderful what superstition does in stamping the value of things in the eyes of the world. Now think of Sebastiano del Piombo's *Raising of Lazarus*,

which is at present in Angerstein's gallery! It cost 7000 guineas! Now, for my own part, I should hesitate before I gave forty shillings for it—that is, if I were about to purchase it for my own use. There are some good heads in it, and it displays great power of drawing, but it is miserably deficient in breadth, and a great deal of it is in the nasty, hard, cut-up manner which is my aversion. Perhaps I might give forty shillings for it," he added, laughing, "certainly not more."

"Don't you suppose," asked Ward, "that people who go to see the picture consult their own feelings when they give their opinion of it?"

"Oh, they never think of doing so!" exclaimed Northcote; "it cost 7000 guineas, and therefore must be fine. I tell you it's a mere matter of superstition." . . .

"Can you tell me," said Ward, "if Betty, the boy-actor—the young Roscius—was as extraordinary as some people have represented, for I myself never had an opportunity of seeing him act?"

"His gracefulness," replied Northcote, "was exquisite; I never saw anything like it before. When Humphreys saw him, he cried out, 'Oh, 'tis the young Apollo come down from his pedestal!' It could not be expected, of course, that he should play those parts which required experience in life: they gave him something to do which required little more than elegant declamation.



THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

FROM THE PAINTING BY SEBASTIANO DEL PIOMBO IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY



He made all the other actors look so ugly that I could hardly bear to look at them. To be sure, a considerable part of this exquisiteness he had in common with other young people—it appertained to his time of life. Now I have never seen a play acted by school-boys without witnessing, in some of them, an extreme gracefulness. If you want to be delighted in this way, you have only to look on at young people dancing. But then, this only extends to about the age of eighteen; a set of people dancing, who are about the age of forty, look like so many idiots. Gracefulness, indeed, belongs to the young of all animals, and you may see this in the play of kittens and puppies."

"But you are speaking more as a painter," interrupted Ward, "than a stage-critic; was Betty's acting equal to his graceful appearance?"

"Yes, his acting was as fine as his looks; indeed, it wasn't like acting, but real life."

"I suppose his fine acting ended with his boyhood?" asked Ward.

"No, I consider that it did not. I saw him in the part of *Alexander*, when, in later life, he came before the public a second time. Both Fuseli and I agreed that he did it finer than anyone else could have done. Ah, but it didn't matter how well he did it then; the world will not admire the same thing over again—the world never wonders twice. The public, indeed, seemed to feel ashamed to have

to wonder a second time, and they ran off like a dog with its tail between its legs, like a dog which neither threats nor coaxings can bring back again. With the exception of Kean, I consider that Betty was the finest actor in England, and it was a great pity that he had such a host of prejudices to encounter. It is much the same, however, in everything else, and the world will rarely allow, for instance, that a man can do two things well. Now, Titian was the greatest colourist in the world, but because of this he must be considered unable to draw, and yet the contrary is well known to all who really know anything about the matter. And Raphael was condemned to know nothing about colour, because he was so very fine in composition and design, and yet this was equally untrue!

"As we are speaking about the stage, you will be interested, I think, to learn that I saw Ireland's counterfeit play of *Vortigern* acted. Everybody, of course, is aware that Ireland pretended to have found that play in an old chest, along with some love-letters and a lock of hair, and he passed them all off as Shakespeare's. A great talk was made about them at the time, and Dr. Parr, indeed, went so far as to go down on his knees and kiss the *precious relics*. It was easy enough to see that Shakespeare could have had no hand in them. However, nothing would serve but *Vortigern* must be brought out at Drury Lane Theatre, and

I remember going there with Fuseli to see it. We sat in a box close to the stage. Kemble acted the part of Vortigern, and I remember his drawing close to our box and saying to us in an undertone, ‘Did you ever hear such d——d stuff?’”

“Was the trick soon discovered?” asked Ward.

“It was indeed! The galleries first began to cry out; they are really the best judges, as they follow the impulse of their feelings like children; they don’t go to criticise, but to be impressed, and as this end is answered or not, they are pleased or disappointed, and this—in my opinion—is the true way of judging of all works of art.”

Northcote, who had finished a portrait of himself, showed it to Ward, and asked him for his judgment on it. Ward expressed his approbation of the work, and remarked that it was a good likeness.

“Yes,” said Northcote, “I think it must be like, as Hazlitt has praised it, who never praises anything, and Godwin has known it, who never knows anything! It is surprising how little both poets and authors seem to know of the art of painting—and yet, you know, painters are often very good judges of poetry. I must say, Johnson and Goldsmith were modest enough to acknowledge that they knew nothing of painting; indeed, I may say that, with the exception of Burke, all authors and poets I have ever known scarcely know when a picture is right end upwards. I have always

remarked, too, how much more humble and modest painters generally are than poets and authors, and the reason must be this—they are obliged every moment to compare their works with nature, and thus feel their defects, whereas the others are only led to compare theirs with those of other men like themselves, and are generally filled with self-conceit. I confess I have a great dislike to poets: they are for the most part a wretched set, and if I had a son I should be dreadfully alarmed if I found him writing verses."

"An author," interrupted Ward, "is generally a man of talent."

"Oh, but in my opinion," continued Northcote, "they are not the wisest or greatest of men who have written books. A man must have a considerable share of vanity to become an author, and vanity, you know, is a drawback upon greatness of character. Besides, I have always felt there is something vulgar in notoriety—that it is too much like a sort of prostitution, and I assure you that I have never seen my name in print without shrinking—at least, it certainly was so in the earlier periods of my life. It may seem like affectation in me, who have all my life been a candidate for fame, to talk in this way, and yet I had the feeling which I have just mentioned to you. To have my name hackneyed in the public papers, however desirable it might be in some respects, was still in a certain degree disagreeable to

me. I felt in a certain measure degraded by it; it was, at any rate, a departure from grandeur. No, no; I can't help thinking that many much finer minds have gone out of the world, leaving not a trace behind them, than those who have become noted from their writings. I am speaking, of course, of the common run of mankind; I speak, at least, of those in the second class, for the first class is out of all reach. I know of no man who wrote from the pure motive of doing good, except Dr. Watts. As for Shakespeare, he wrought for bread and cheese, and Dr. Johnson and all the others did just the same. Now, Mrs. Godwin was shocked when I talked in this manner to her the other day, especially when I told her that learned men were never any judges of painting. 'How is it,' she asked me, 'that men who have so cultivated their minds should not be able to feel the beauties of so refined an art?' I answered her that I could not account for it, except by saying that such men become warped from the true feeling for nature. At any rate, I told her that could I have Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith and a little girl in my painting-room all at the same time to criticise any work of mine, I should listen most carefully of all to the little child, for her voice would be the voice of nature.

"But we were speaking of authors just now, and I may tell you that I have told Hazlitt of his mistake in representing Vandyke to have married a daughter

of Earl Cowper, instead of into the family of Earl Gowrie.<sup>1</sup> Now, such mistakes are symptoms of sad vulgarity, as these are things no gentleman can be ignorant of, there being no Earl Cowper till the reign of George the First. Hazlitt affected to make light of it, and was unwilling to acknowledge himself to blame. He said he had given the essence of the thing, and dates and names were of minor consequence; besides, he said, he had written the essay in the country, far away from any books of reference. 'No!' I said to him, 'I see you cannot bear to be told of your faults, but a person who possessed an ardent wish to be accurate would be thankful to be told when he was wrong!' Now Hazlitt, by this carelessness, invalidates his essay in every other respect. If we wish to excel, every possible means must be resorted to, and no labour must be spared. We must never allow ourselves to say, 'This is good enough for the occasion,' or 'This is good enough for those who want it.' Sir Isaac Newton, when once asked what he thought of his own attainments, said, 'I don't feel myself wiser than other men, but I do appear to myself to take more pains than others.'

"I sometimes reflect how easy it is for some

<sup>1</sup> The mistake to which Northcote alludes occurs in Hazlitt's essay *On Sitting for One's Picture*, which was included in that author's volume, *Plain Speaker*, published in 1826.

authors to express their thoughts in writing ; fluency, and facility of expression come quite natural to them. Now what literary work I have done has been accomplished under circumstances of much difficulty and great labour, for I have never been able to write with any facility. I have tried to give force and point in my writings, but the composition of sentences has always been a labour to me. The modern newspaper writers, I daresay, despise my quaint old style, but I can tell them, however they think of it, they cannot think worse of it than I do of theirs ! There is a vulgarity in their long-worded, affected manner—to me, indeed, it stinks of vulgarity ! Their foolish and affected expressions annoy me considerably. Now, I sometimes get hold of Cobbett's *English Grammar*, and I read it with great attention and delight. Oh ! how I envy that man his power of writing—it is so very clear, and so truly English. I would give anything could I write as he does ! . . .

“ I am glad you think my portrait a good likeness. I often find myself wondering why people are so frequently dissatisfied with their portraits, but I think I have discovered the principal reason—they are not pleased with themselves, and therefore cannot endure a faithful representation. I find it is the same with myself. I cannot bear any portraits of myself, except those of my own painting, where I have had the opportunity of coaxing them, so

as to suit my own feelings. To be sure, there's Harlow's portrait of me, and yet, perhaps, that has too cynical a look. Now I have often thought very meanly of my own person, and this is mortifying, certainly, but I think it has been of use to me, after all, as such reflections often made me feel the greater necessity for distinguishing myself in my walk of life. This was the case with Pope, and such thoughts were a dreadful source of annoyance to him all his life, quite a counterbalance to all the fame and reputation he acquired by his works. Lord Byron's lame foot was the same to him—he never for one moment seemed to forget it. No, no ; personal defects are very acutely felt. I remember that when I was painting the portrait of the old King (George the Third) on horseback, which is now in Lancaster Castle, I was sadly at a loss for a model to enable me to make him sit properly on horseback. I got a soldier to come for that purpose, and he sat on horseback in my back-parlour for a considerable time. Oh, he was a very handsome and grand-looking figure, and he sat with such a quiet, patient dignity whilst I was looking up at him, that I shall never forget it, or what I felt on that occasion. Had I been a louse I could not have thought more meanly of myself than I did at that moment!"

The conversation of the two painters now turned on Homer and Shakespeare.

"Now the works of Homer," observed Ward, "are considered perfection!"

"Why, to be sure, there seems to be superstition enough in regard to Homer," replied Northcote, "but for my own part I never could see so much in him; there never appeared to me to be much of nature in his works: there is, in my opinion, at least a thousand times more in Shakespeare. To be sure, I have only read translations, and classical men cry out, 'Oh, you can know nothing of Homer from translations!' Now what can be the reason of this? There is the Book of Job!—that was written in a foreign language still more difficult, and yet the translation of it is the finest thing we have. *Don Quixote* and *Gil Blas* are translations, yet they are as fine—nay! finer than anything we have in our own language. An attempt has been several times made to give a literal translation of Homer, but it has always failed, being of such stuff as nobody would read. Now, as to Pope's Homer, it can scarcely be called a translation; it is more like an original poem. I suspect Homer, like the ancient sculptors, owes a great deal of his fame to nothing but superstition. I have a great admiration for Shakespeare, and his works appear to me to be nothing short of miraculous; you can scarcely account for them by natural means. Oh, how fine is that speech of Othello to the Venetian Senate! You might almost imagine that Shakespeare had

heard the words spoken — so Moorishly wild, so grand, and yet so proper, and totally different from what he has put into the mouths of his other characters ! And then, no circumstance, however apparently trifling, seems to have escaped Shakespeare's attention ; the speech of the Duke of Buckingham on his way to execution, in the play of *Henry the Eighth*, is one instance of what I mean.<sup>1</sup> The works of Fielding, and indeed of other writers, though written so recently, are already becoming old-fashioned ; nobody will ever be able to say this of the works of Shakespeare, which are true to nature, and which, indeed, might have been written only last week. I might draw a comparison between the human being and the clothes we wear. The human being remains the same in all ages ; it is only the clothes which vary, in different countries and at different periods ; and the works of a man—whether of painter or author—that keep to the former and are true to nature, will never become old-fashioned as long as the world shall last.'

<sup>1</sup> Act ii., Sc. I.

## CHAPTER VII

Northcote's methods of painting—On art treatises—On colouring—Nature always in harmony—The Royal Academy—On colouring again—“Fine colouring is lost on the generality of mankind”—A word on scumbling—Gandy a great colourist—The best mode of commencing a picture—Figures in portraits should be as fine as possible—The naked female arm—“Sir Joshua glazed too much.”

WARD was somewhat disappointed with Northcote's style of painting. It was not as fine as he had expected it to be, and he considered it rather feeble, scrubbed, and raw in colour. He mentioned these feelings to his friend John Jackson, the well-known painter, who, though concurring with what he had expressed, said the colouring would come to a fine tone in the course of a few years, as Northcote depended upon time to give a real finish to his pictures.

“ Northcote himself afterwards told me,” records Ward, “ that he never ventured to use varnish, or wax, or any of those nostrums, because, though they produced a fine effect at the time of their application, he had seen how they had been the means of destroying the effects of some of Sir Joshua's finest pictures. He was even afraid of much oil, as it tended to lower the brightness of his colours, but he had recourse sometimes to mixing it with turpentine

for diluting his paints.<sup>1</sup> His pictures accordingly suffered in appearance at first, but he was well repaid for this mortification when he looked at them ten years after they had left his easel. Young painters are apt to think that the art of painting consists in recipes, and that certain materials, and certain secrets in the method of using them, are of vital importance. Such, at least, was my own impression at this period of my life, and I was constantly watching Northcote's mode of laying on his colours, and asking him questions whenever I dared to do so. A clergyman in Yorkshire, an amateur painter, wrote to me one day saying that he had made a copy of a portrait of a friend of his which Northcote had painted. He desired me to ask the painter some questions regarding the process he had made use of in obtaining the colour. He particularly wished to know if the greys, or greyish tints, on the edges of his shadows in the face, were not produced by scumbling, or bringing a lighter tint thinly over a darker and warmer one. Northcote said the clergyman was probably correct, as he was fond of cool negative tints produced by scumbling."

"But I must tell you," said Northcote to Ward, a little later, "that these modes of bringing out effects, which are considered by copyists as sovereign rules of art, are frequently, I believe, no more than the

<sup>1</sup> Northcote used drying oil and spirits of turpentine in equal quantities for his *vehicle*.

effects of weakness and inability, even in the greatest painters, to execute at once their ideas of excellence. They are not so much methods of painting, as modes of recovering blunders. I assure you that I consider Sir Joshua's painting, for instance, to be no more than the strugglings of a mighty genius, with comparative feebleness in the practical part, there being—so to speak—inability to thoroughly execute his ideas. To his eye only, indeed, did he get his work decent; to his liking never, or at least very seldom. This may be said, I think, of all great painters, for the *mind* of a great man runs before all possible execution. Lely, for instance, executed the nose in a spirited manner, but then he made his noses all alike, and therefore knew exactly how to do it, whereas Sir Joshua, who tried to make the organ as various as he found it in nature, had to learn how to do it every time he painted a fresh face. 'Tis on this account you see so many touches dragged over each other in his works, as he was obliged to try again and again before he could accomplish what he wanted. He had an exquisite *feeling* for the beauties he saw in nature, and he executed them as best he could. It is in the works of Salvator Rosa, and West, and Luca Giordano—men who had no such struggles after feeling—that you find the smart *execution*. Titian had little of it, and for the same reason that I have assigned, I believe."

"There are many treatises," remarked Ward,

“which give directions for painting the flesh, and some of them I have read; indeed, I went to the trouble of copying out Bardwell’s *Treatise on Oil-Painting*.”

“Yes, I am aware there are many such treatises,” continued Northcote, “and they may be useful to a certain extent when a young man is commencing and knows nothing; but they are most of them written by inferior painters, the more successful ones having neither time nor inclination, and they will do little for you except they can teach you the art of seeing nature, for that is the great affair. In regard to the different modes of painting the flesh, I believe it is of little consequence which is pursued, if you only keep the colours distinct; too much mixing makes them muddy, and destroys their brilliancy, you know. Sir Joshua was of opinion that the grey tints in the flesh of Titian’s pictures were obtained by scumbling cool tints over warm ones; and others prefer commencing in a cool, grey manner, and leaving the greys for the middle tints, whilst they paint upon the lights with warmer colours, also enriching the shadows with warmer and deeper colours too. But, for my own part, I have always thought it a good way to consider the flesh as composed of different coloured net-work laid over each other, as is really the case in nature, and may be seen by those who will take the pains to look carefully into it.”

Ward, who had painted the portrait of a Yorkshire lady, now submitted it to his friend, and invited an expression of opinion regarding its merits.

“What have you introduced such gaudy, flaring colours for?” exclaimed Northcote; “don’t you see that you have made her look excessively vulgar by having done so? If I might give you advice, it would be to keep the modesty of nature constantly before your mind, for you know it is enforced by no less an authority than Shakespeare himself. You remember what he says in his advice to the players in *Hamlet*, don’t you? You should have it by heart.<sup>1</sup> This modesty of nature must be attended to in every department of art—in expression, attitude, colouring, and everything else; the moment you overstep it, you ruin your picture. In regard to colouring, I have always thought that a picture ought to be as opposite as possible to Chinese painting, which would be effected by making all the shadows of one colour, or nearly so, whereas the Chinese shade red with stronger red, blue with stronger blue, etc. Colours in a picture ought to strike the eye no more than they do in nature, otherwise they are wrong. Now Vandyke is a fine example of this; the reds, for instance, in his

<sup>1</sup> “Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature.”—*Hamlet*, Act iii., Sc. 2.

portrait of Charles the First *on the white horse*, are so sober as not to strike the eye at all. I do assure you that fierce and gaudy colouring in a portrait is as disagreeable to me as swearing and indecency in conversation. Bright colours, like jewels, must be used sparingly, otherwise they lose their effect; and I can't help thinking that Sir Joshua's red curtains, which he introduced in his backgrounds for the sake of colour, sometimes do harm."

"The rule for supporting a mass of colour by other smaller portions of the same colour," observed Northcote, in continuation of the subject, "appears to me to be frequently only a way of getting out of a scrape. If a mass of colour requires such support, it must be wrongly done, for this is never the case in nature. Now *that* wants no support, *that* wants no second mass to keep it in countenance! (*pointing to a beautiful piece of red drapery which was placed on his lay figure to be painted from*). No, no; I can't help thinking that this system is like telling a second lie to help the first. Nature, you see, is always in harmony, she can harmonise one mass of colour without two or three more to help it. Rules of art may be all very well in their place, but still I am of opinion that Titian's great superiority did not arise from his superior knowledge of these rules, but from his being able to see nature better than others; and

though I shall be contradicted, I think that if Raphael had lived to a moderately old age, he would have become a finer colourist even than Titian ; I think his later works in the Vatican show that this would have been the case. But painters have dreadful difficulties to cope with, and it requires the greatest caution to steer through them. One thing which harms them is their continually seeing inferior productions ; it is like keeping low company. Even the opinions of inferior painters should be avoided as mischievous, for they are apt to pull the mind down to their own level. Now, for a man to be able to judge of a profession, he must be able to look down upon it from the platform of a superior mind, but such a man can seldom be found, for most men, especially inferior painters, take a narrow view of art. Sir Joshua never would associate with this class of painters—he always kept aloof from them, and was determined to converse with none but first-rate minds, such as Johnson, and Burke, and Goldsmith. Why, I observed when going through Sir Joshua's papers and memoranda, the following observation in his handwriting : 'I formerly used to think that painters were the best judges of pictures, as a jeweller is of diamonds, but I now find they are not so.'

"The faculty of judging of diamonds must arise from a well-practised eye, and is only a mechanical attainment, not requiring any great mental power ;

but to judge of a work of art does require high mental power, and the mind that is too weak to attain excellence as an artist can hardly be strong enough to be a judge of the merit of others. Now it is on this account that I have sometimes spoken of the Royal Academy as 'Fools' Hospital,' for it is an institution in its nature calculated to give that importance to inferior capacities, who, by tricks and time-serving, have managed to become members—a distinction which they could not have obtained by their merit as artists. These men obtain good places for their pictures in the Exhibition—places which their pictures, as works of art, do not merit—and thus they are held by an un-discriminating public in greater estimation than they deserve. . . .

"I have sacrificed everything in my own pictures to mental amusement."

"But sometimes your colouring is very fine!" interrupted Ward.

"That is only by a sort of chance, as I have never paid much attention to colouring, beyond keeping my tints as distinct as possible. Vandyke, and some others, united their colours while wet, which gives a fine, delicate look to the flesh, but I can never work on that plan. Vandyke, moreover, knew so well where to lay the tints, and was under no necessity of teasing them. Some young portrait-painters make the mistake of getting the

white of the eyes too light, which destroys their brilliancy, for the shine does not tell upon them. Some painters use yellow in the flesh, and that's a thing I never dare do; I leave it to time. I have constantly been blamed on this score, but I was brought up in an instinctive dread of yellow in the flesh, Sir Joshua having always so strictly prohibited the use of it. I am fond of a bright vivid look in my colour, but I always find this is destroyed by any attempt to tone down with yellow. I have always liked the silvery tones which are found in the works of Vandyke and Teniers. Vandyke, I think, never used yellow in the flesh, except perhaps in the complexions of some very dark male portraits. Now look at that skirting-board! (*pointing to the skirting-board of his painting-room*)—time has softened the colour into a low, orange-coloured tint, but once it was a bright flaring white; it has never been toned down, and yet how mellow it has become! No, I myself never think too much about colouring; my two chief objects have always been to give expression, and to give a rich effect of light and shadow; these I consider to be essentials; expression is felt by every creature down to the very dog, and a forcible light and shade is necessary to show off this expression, whereas fine colouring is lost upon the generality of mankind, for it is a thing understood by very few. I must say that I always set about

my work by endeavouring to obtain a faithful representation of nature as soon as I possibly can. I consider that my sitter may possibly be prevented from ever coming to me again, so I make sure of as much as I can whilst I have him. I am not aware that I have any particular method unless it is that I depend a good deal on scumbling, and drawing one colour over another for giving the colouring I aim at. I endeavour, as I have told you before, to keep my tints distinct, and as like crayon-painting as possible. Now in regard to scumbling, I remember well that in my picture of *Arthur and Hubert*, the colouring of the door was particularly admired. Now, it had been too dark, and I rubbed a lighter tint over it, in order to alter the effect. This accidentally gave the colour which was admired, and I have since pursued the plan purposely; besides, it appears to me to have been the plan made use of by Titian. I always liked the cool, grey hue, which is produced by scumbling. It is on this account, I believe, why I so much admire the colouring of Teniers, and why I always liked the morning scenes of Claude better than his sunsets, for I prefer cool pictures to hot ones."

"I find, by experience," observed Ward, "that to paint the flesh with tints resembling nature does not answer, as with myself it always comes out too low when done in such a way."

"Certainly," resumed Northcote, "it requires to be pushed higher. White, for instance, is such an inadequate representation of light, that I always paint it as high as I can, and I never find in the end that my things are too bright. Now, in regard to what is called texture in the flesh, I think Gandy came nearer nature than any painter who ever lived.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, Titian was the greatest colourist—he knew so well where to lay his colours—but I cannot think that even Titian's flesh had so entirely the substance of flesh as Gandy's. The great secret of colouring lies in the eye of a painter! If we have a good eye for colour, we may make use of anything whatever. If we get captivated with certain colours and run into excess, the only way to cure ourselves is to prohibit the use of those colours altogether. Now Rubens, I believe, was afraid of using black, and painted his black draperies from a mixture of other colours. He was in the habit of relieving light objects on light backgrounds, and thus gave beautifully rich and, at the same time, new effects, with vast breadth. He was the first, too, who could do this, whereas Titian never thought of doing it, but always relieved light by dark, and dark by light."

<sup>1</sup> This high praise has reference to William Gandy. He followed his profession at Exeter and Plymouth, and many of his portraits are to be found in Devonshire and Cornwall. He died about the year 1729.

Ward asked Northcote what he considered to be the best mode of commencing a picture.

“Why,” said he, “it is difficult to fix upon any precise method, or to lay down any positive rules; but I consider it is no bad method to commence with black and white, that is, merely light and shade, with a little yellow for the reflected lights—this was Vandyke’s method, I believe; at any rate, I have seen a portrait by Vandyke in that state which, for some reason or other, he had not proceeded with; indeed, you can see from the exceeding clearness of his colouring that something like this must have been his method. Sir Joshua, we know, made his pupils commence with black and white, and always prohibited the use of many colours. But, after all, little can be said as to the modes of painting, for every one must pursue that course which enables him best to accomplish his purpose. Men may go to the same place by different roads. Nothing can surely be more unlike than the manner of Titian and that of Vandyke, and yet the end they both had in view was the same. Now, if I were to proceed on Vandyke’s method of making outlines, I should produce nothing but dry lininess, I should never obtain a rich effect in my pictures; but, still, the method may suit another painter very well, as it did Vandyke, for instance, whose great power of execution enabled him to avoid lininess; in short, the best method for

any man is that which enables him to avoid the faults that he is the most liable to, for where there is an effective mind, something perhaps will be substituted that is better than the regular way of going about the thing. There are many difficulties with which painters must contend, but they should do all in their power to overcome them. A young artist showed me the other evening the half-finished portrait of a child which he was painting, and asked me for my opinion on it. 'Why have you painted the arms so thin?' I asked him. He explained that he had painted them from the child, who was very thin. I told him that was not a sufficient reason for making them so thin as to be disagreeable to look at. Why, it has been a settled point from Titian down to the present day, that the figures in portraits ought to be as fine as possible—those of women from the finest Grecian statues, and those of children from Fiamingo. Fiamingo's children were modelled from Titian's pictures, and were as beautiful as possible. The only substitute for this method is to paint the throat, arms, etc., when they happen to be too thin, as covered with drapery."

"It is certainly disagreeable," observed Ward, "to look at a thin, female arm."

"The naked female arm," continued Northcote, "is certainly either the most beautiful or the most hideous thing in nature; if you want to be con-

vinced of this, you have only to go into a company of ladies where every one is dressed in the same fashion, which they are very apt to be, in spite of the shocking appearance which many of them must know they are cutting. The artist to whom I refer also made another mistake ; he had attempted to paint the child as laughing. Now to do that was to vulgarise his work, and he ought to have known it ! In nature, a laugh may be pleasing, but it is only so when it is transient ; it becomes harassing when fixed in a picture ; besides, it never is well done, as it is next to impossible to make all the features bear their due part in it, and then it becomes a grimace. All expression, of whatever kind it may be, is an infringement on beauty. The young painter had also thrown part of the white frock into shade, whereas it wanted a mass of light. Now to bring together as much light and also as much shade as possible always gives a fine effect. For my own part, I always wish my objects to appear as distinct as possible at every distance, and in every degree of light. Sir Joshua, I am aware, had recourse to catching lights, but I differ from him in opinion on this subject, as I have always liked broad lights. I can't help thinking that Sir Joshua cut up his whole-length portraits too much by these catching lights, more especially in his backgrounds. Sir Joshua also glazed too much, and I cannot agree with such a method, for pictures done in this way

will not last. My own aim has always been to paint with as little vehicle as possible, and I have put myself to great inconvenience by so doing, being obliged to renounce a great many beauties of execution which can only be accomplished with a full pencil and plenty of liquid. I saw the mischief that Sir Joshua's method produced, though his things were so beautiful when newly done; I saw they would not last, and I think he must have seen it himself. I have wondered exceedingly at his proceedings in this respect, and have sometimes fancied that he must have preferred present, to posthumous, fame."

Ward expressed disagreement with these opinions, and Northcote at once replied, "Why, if it was the case, who is to say that Sir Joshua was wrong in so doing? Who is to say that the man is a fool who prefers making a strong impression on his contemporaries while he is there to enjoy it, to the being admired by posterity, when he himself is totally out of the reach of either their praise or censure? Of course, I must leave out the honesty of the question, for he cannot be defended for painting perishable pictures, and taking people's money for them, when he knew they would not last. However, he probably thought they would last as long as they would be wanted, or cared for."

"But then," asked Ward, "how is transparency to be obtained if glazing be prohibited?"

"Fine colouring in the flesh," continued Northcote, "is like net-work of different colours laid over each other, which gives to it a transparent look. It is the want of this transparency why painted dolls, or the rouge put on by ladies, never look like nature; it's all on the surface, whereas the colours of the flesh are under the surface and only partially seen through it."

## CHAPTER VIII

Northcote speaks in praise of Boydell—The Shakespeare Gallery—Historical pictures should represent the popular idea of a subject—Painters should allow their works to tell their own story—Foreground figures must not be too large—“A man paints his very soul in historical painting”—A word concerning print-sellers and picture-dealers—On pleasant manners—The sulky men on the Eddystone—Northcote’s definition of a true gentleman—On Sir William Knighton: his early difficulties and ultimate success—Knighton’s quarrel with Northcote concerning the latter’s portrait of Sir Walter Scott—On instinct in animals—Their cruel treatment in England.

THE conversation between the two artists having turned on the effort which Alderman Boydell made to encourage historic art in England, by initiating the scheme of a Shakespeare Gallery, Northcote observed that the time which he occupied in painting pictures for that Gallery was the golden era of his life.

“Oh! it was a noble undertaking on the part of Boydell!” declared he; “but I never thought it could succeed here in England, as neither were there painters prepared to execute the necessary pictures, nor was the public prepared to appreciate them if ever so finely done. I knew it must prove his ruin; but as he was determined at all events to make the attempt, and applied to me to be one of the painters for the collection, I thought I might as well benefit by it as leave it to others to do so.

Ah! but it didn't answer! With the exception of a few pictures by Sir Joshua and Opie, and—I hope I may add—myself, it was such a collection of slip-slop imbecility as was dreadful to look at, and turned out, as I had expected it would, in the ruin of poor Boydell's affairs. However, I had the satisfaction of finding that neither Opie nor myself had contributed to his downfall, for our pictures sold for considerably more at the sale than he had paid us for them. Oh! I was indeed sorry that it turned out so badly, though it was the greatest benefit to me, for it enabled me to become an historical painter, which otherwise I never could have been to any extent; I should have been obliged to have devoted my time, or nearly the whole of it, to painting portraits. The prices Boydell paid me were not high, certainly, but then they enabled me to live comfortably whilst thus employed; I could thus devote my time towards studying the art deeply, and was daily improving myself by unceasing practice, for I worked very hard, I assure you, and was delighted to do so, as I knew it was the only opportunity I should probably ever have. Oh, I was delightfully occupied during that period! When I reflect upon it, I am astonished at my own good fortune, for that singular and bold undertaking came exactly at the right time for me; had it been earlier, I couldn't have availed myself of it, for I should not

have been prepared for it. I always look upon Boydell as my true patron, for though he only employed me as one tradesman does another in the way of business, yet he enabled me to do something which I never could have done but for him. I never went but once to see the Lord Mayor's procession, and that was when Boydell entered upon his year of office. The show is sometimes ridiculed by thoughtless persons, but it isn't a thing to be despised! I took up my station at a certain window, and there was a young man present who amused himself the whole time by turning the scene into burlesque. I couldn't help reprimanding him for doing so, and told him that it was in reality a solemn and important office, and not to be made light of. I assured him that the office of Lord Mayor of London was one of such power and consequence, that were it hereditary it would become formidable even to the Government, and that in the case of Boydell the high honour was the reward of a long course of virtue and industry, and was calculated to act as a fine stimulus to youth by showing them what might be expected from the exercise of such qualities.

"Now with regard to the Shakespeare Gallery, it was a subject of complaint that we painters didn't choose the finest passages to paint from. It was a mistaken complaint, for pithy sayings are ad-

dressed to the ear, not to the eye, and they are not suitable for painting. These fine passages are proper for Shakespeare's language, but they are not fit subjects for the painter's language, which is addressed to a different organ. On the other hand, the great beauties in Correggio's pictures could not have been described by Shakespeare or any other man! Some painters of the present day adhere too rigidly to what they suppose to be the matter-of-fact in their historical pictures. It is a mistaken notion, and the appellation *history painting* is the cause of it. Now it ought to be called *poetical painting*, for its object is not to give information, but to make an impression, precisely the same as poetry does, only by different means. Whilst I was painting my *Wat Tyler*, I remember, a friend one day invited me to accompany him to the British Museum; he would there show me, he said, a more correct account of the great incident than the one commonly current. But old Boydell, for whom I was painting the picture, opposed the idea, saying, 'No, no; we want a picture according to the common, popular story!'-and very wise I think he was in possessing that idea. You have the same thing well exemplified in the case of Rowe's *Tragedy of Jane Shore*. She is there described as creeping up under a pent-house in absolute wretchedness, and yet she comes *on the stage*

immediately afterwards as though she had come out of a band-box! Now this is an inconsistency, certainly, but it is right, because it produces the right impression, namely, a sympathy for her situation, which would not have been produced had she appeared in squalidness and filth, for that would have produced disgust.

“Painters should always try to tell their story well; for my own part, I have always been very careful to give the circumstantial details, as they help to fix the subject. My *Murder of the Princes in the Tower* has never been mistaken for anything else; it was clearly the murder of two innocent children, and that was the essence of it. Those who look at exhibited pictures are generally persons who at the time merely seek amusement, and will not subject themselves to any trouble; if they can comprehend the subject at first sight, well and good; if not, they will pass on to another picture. It is therefore necessary to mark the story distinctly, to have a fine effect of light and shade, and everything that facilitates their seeing and comprehending the picture, otherwise the spectator will exclaim, ‘So far from amusing me, you have puzzled me; I cannot make the thing out!’

“I advised a painter the other day never to explain by words what his picture is intended to represent; I told him to endeavour by every means to find out the effect on the spectator without giving any verbal

explanation. If you can talk well, persons will fancy they see in a picture what in reality has been produced by your tongue, and then their judgment loses its value, and you yourself are misled in consequence. Fuseli used to palaver before his pictures in this manner, and did himself much harm by it. Besides, as Sir Joshua used to say, a man who can gain applause by *talking*, will hardly take the trouble to earn it by painting, which is a thousand times more difficult; indeed, I have even heard Sir Joshua remark that when a young painter feels inclined to talk, he ought instantly to sew up his mouth. No, no; a painter cannot be too close-mouthed; he must seek no applause, except what he can gain by his works. When my own pictures are in progress, I always take great pains to ascertain what effect they have upon persons who are totally unprepared to see them. I watch their looks—for I depend more upon looks than upon words—and try to induce them to say what they think my picture represents. But it's very difficult to get them to speak out, as they are afraid of committing themselves, and I am obliged to resort to a little stratagem by asking them if they think it represents so-and-so—something quite opposite to what it really is. 'Oh, no, no! it can't be *that*!' they exclaim. If they hit upon any subject without any explanation from me, and I perceive that the impression I intended is produced on their minds,

I come to the conclusion that I have, at least, succeeded so far as to make my picture tell its own story."

"The practice of many painters of the present day," observed Ward, "is very different from what you recommend. When they exhibit their pictures to the public, they give a long descriptive account, and, not content with what prose can do for them, they introduce long quotations from the poets."

"Well," continued Northcote, "they find their true deserts. The printed account is often the best part of their work. Many persons, doubtless, will fancy that they see in a picture what they are told to see. But the picture and the catalogue will soon get separated; the painting will then have to rest on its own merits, and will soon find its own level. . . . Historical painters in this country should not make their foreground figures too large; I know one artist who has made his foreground figures not less than nine or ten feet high. Now, he thinks that he's imitating the great masters in so doing, but *they* never intended their figures to appear larger than life. No; it was only to prevent them from appearing less, and they would have appeared less if they had been no larger than life in the situations they were intended to be placed in, such as ceilings, and other situations, at a great distance from the eye. The boys, for instance, in sculpture, in St. Peter's at Rome, are much above

life-size, but the proportions of the whole place are so vast that they don't appear so ; indeed, if they had been no larger than life they would hardly have been seen at all in that imposing edifice.

" I was told that Thomson, the artist, said of me the other day that I was the only historical painter in England ; but it must be something peculiarly my own that he alluded to, for there are numbers of historical painters here besides myself. Of course, real historical pictures are scarce enough—we all know that—and I have only seen two pictures even by Titian, indeed, that can strictly be called historical, and those are the *Peter Martyr* and *The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence*. Titian, in a general sense, copied individual nature so much, that his pictures really come under the head of portraiture. A man paints his very soul in historical painting, and discovers traits of character which have not been known before, even to himself. Raphael's purity of mind and his virtuous feelings gave him a great pre-eminence over other painters of history ; and Domenichino, too, owed everything to these same qualities, for his execution was but indifferent. It was delightful to me to pursue the study of historical painting, for I could follow my own fancy, without being thwarted and disgusted and brow-beaten by vulgar or purse-proud ignorance. Why ! I seemed to be in Heaven, for I could apply my mind to lofty purpose ; the hired models, being

dependent people, were quiet and gave no trouble. The Prince of Wales<sup>1</sup> one day sent to offer me any of his horses to paint from, but I didn't avail myself of his kindness, for I found I could obtain what I wanted so much more comfortably at a livery-stables. Now Sir Joshua felt this same thing strongly, and was for ever painting from beggars, over whom he could have complete command, and leaving his mind perfectly at liberty for the purposes of study! Good G—d! how he used to fill his painting-room with such malkins; you would have been afraid to come near them, and yet from those people he produced his celebrated pictures. When any of the great people came, Sir Joshua used to flounce them into another room until he wanted them again."

"Don't you consider," asked a visitor, "that the publishers gain too much profit by publishing the prints from artists' works?"

"It is necessary," observed Northcote, "for a painter to employ the print-sellers in publishing his prints, for they have means of pushing them into circulation, which a painter cannot pretend to have,—besides, his time is a consideration. In my own dealings with Boydell with regard to the pictures that I painted for his Shakespeare Gallery, I consider he had a full right to all the profits he obtained—for had he not been at the expense and

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards George IV.

risk of setting a mighty machine to work, and to create a demand for my pictures, which I myself could never have been able to do? But I often think that picture-dealing is a dreadful occupation. A dealer quite recently applied to me for my opinion of a picture; he said he quite understood it to be a Leonardo da Vinci! I was sorely puzzled what answer to give him, for I had a feeling that whatever I might say would appear harsh to him. It is very difficult, you know, to ascertain the intrinsic value of a picture; the one in question would most likely be worth seven shillings-and-sixpence—what the man himself had probably given for it. To make a picture sell well there must be accompaniments; it must be proved that it has been painted for some great occasion; or to have been in the possession of some great person, or kings and princes must have longed for it, and longed in vain. Pictures—I speak at least of expensive ones—are seldom purchased from motives of love for them as works of art; it is to have the glory of possessing what others cannot obtain that will often decide a rich man to secure a masterpiece. I am afraid those who succeed in picture-dealing must frequently be sad scoundrels. Look at D——! Why, he poured out lies in torrents! I have heard him say that the great difficulty in his trade was to bargain with the purchaser in such a way that he wouldn't fly off—that the critical

moment was to draw out the fish without his breaking the line."

The two painters now conversed about a certain artist, who had ruined himself by the painting and unsuccessful exhibition of a large historical picture, and who, in consequence, was giving up his London home.

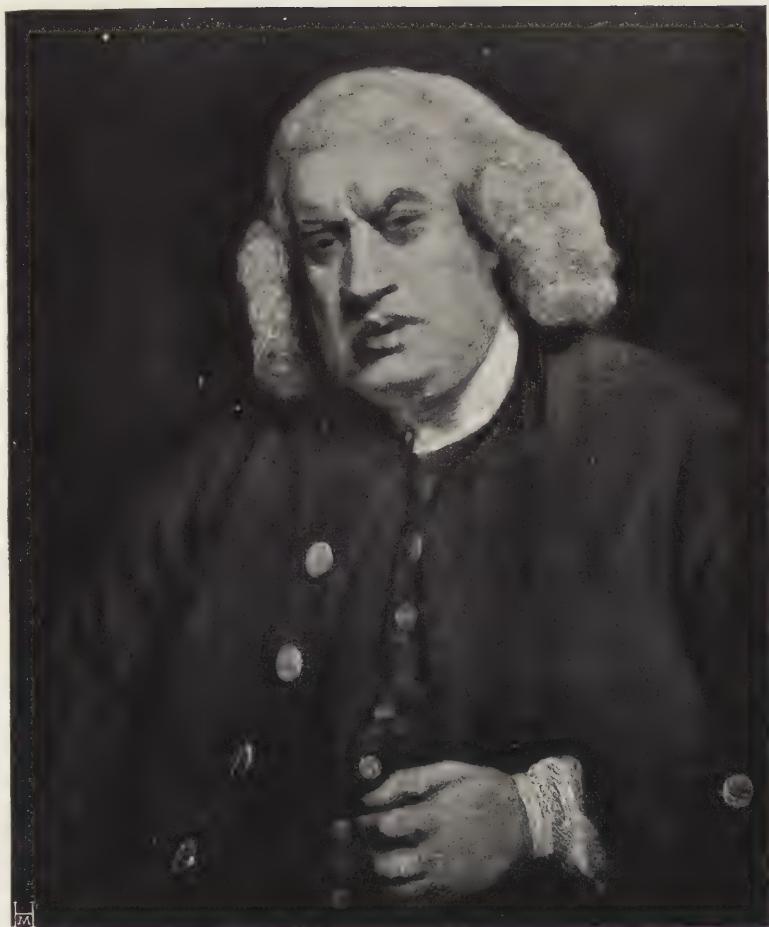
"But it was his haughty and unpleasant manner that really ruined him," remarked Northcote. "His more immediate friends have praised his honesty and uprightness of conduct, but the world at large, however essential these qualities may be, cares very little about them. Pleasant manners, however, are of the greatest importance; everybody feels their importance. The English custom of travelling with strangers without speaking is not only ill-mannered, but foolish, for it is the mutual interest of persons who are obliged to be together to make themselves as agreeable to each other as possible. The greatest instance of the folly of unpleasant manners was in the case of the two men appointed to manage the Eddystone. They quarrelled, and never spoke to each other for a whole month. There they were, obliged to be cooped up together on that dreadful rock, and every moment they were more likely to be washed away than anything else! Now foreigners are wiser in this respect, for they appear to me to make the best of every situation in which they are placed. There can, of

course, be no rules for true politeness; it is a thing of feeling, and cannot be defined by rules. Rules in this, as in many other things, can but roughly define, and, besides, a thousand incidents will occur wherein we have no precedent."

Northcote now mentioned the name of another artist, and said, "*He* is quite a gentleman; too much so, indeed, ever to become a man of genius. Now I think it's impossible for a man of genius to be what we call a *gentleman*, except he puts on the hypocrite. There is something arbitrary in genius, something dictatorial, which is exactly opposite to what is required in a man we call a gentleman. Dr. Johnson could pay compliments, and those of a higher kind than almost any one when he chose to do it, but his general character was not that of a gentleman, certainly. Indeed, it was impossible that it should be so;—he couldn't listen with sufficient deference to the opinions of others, when he felt they were not worth listening to, and well knew he could say things so much better himself."

"I will allow," interrupted Ward, "what you say to be correct, so far as Dr. Johnson is concerned, but you will not satisfy me that a genius and a gentleman are incompatible!"

"Oh! but don't mistake me!" exclaimed Northcote; "I don't mean that a genius cannot be a gentleman in character. Good G—d! if he isn't



DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY



a gentleman he is not fit to be associated with! I only mean to say that he cannot easily have that soft and yielding disposition necessary for the display of gentlemanly manners. Genius is a violent power, not easily controlled, whereas the so-called gentleman is soft and gentle. Genius cannot bear to be opposed. The gentlemanly *character*, however, is a different affair from mere softness, and gentleness of disposition and manners ; it's the highest praise you can give any man, and it implies all that is trustworthy down to the smallest fraction. 'Tis true you will find it in Courts ;—you will find it also in the cottage, and at the tail of the plough. No! it is not confined to any rank or station ; a true gentleman is, in reality, an earthly angel. No man is perfect. There isn't a saint in Heaven who has not had the Devil's thumb-mark on him ; and there was not a man who suffered at Tyburn but had some good qualities about him !

“ Fuseli, whom I know so well, has a manner with him that never appears to me like that of a gentleman, but more like that of a Swiss valet. A real gentleman has a stillness in his manner, and it cannot be imitated ; it must come from within. Now the word *serene* seems to me to describe what I mean exactly, and I wonder the title of *Serene Highness* is not made more use of than it is, for it appears to me to be the grandest of all

titles. A lion, reposing in the dignity of his strength, has more of grandeur than any man; *he* is indeed a serene highness. I'm always delighted when I can introduce animals into my pictures, quite as much as Lawrence is to paint trinkets and finery. We were speaking just now of the painter who has met with a misfortune. Now, it's the way of the world that men generally overturn their own dish. There is seldom a man ruined in the world, but he may take off his hat to himself, and say, 'I thank *you*, sir!' This was Bonaparte's case; he was so firmly seated that nothing could have moved him, but he did it himself—and effectually too. There is scarcely a misfortune that befalls a man but it is his own bringing on, except, perhaps, attacks of illness, and these—if closely looked into—would be found generally owing to his own indiscretion in some way or other. The world talks of this or that man's good fortune, but a man's fortune is in a great measure of his own making; I am convinced of it. A man may almost do anything if he have but the true ambition to do it. There is a false ambition that wishes for the end without employing the means; that is folly, and not ambition. They talk of Knighton as being a lucky man. I don't think Knighton *lucky*; he has been entirely the builder of his own fortune, and there's no luck in that, that I can see, except you take into account what Heaven has given him to

set out with. Knighton possesses a great knowledge of mankind, and sees so clearly what will lead to his interest, that it appears like instinct, or that quality which we choose to call so in the animal creation. He is a good man, and an excellent servant to the King, who cannot bear him out of his sight, and Knighton's health is likely to suffer in consequence. Knighton has a great amount of tact,—only put another person in his place, and he wouldn't be there a week! The King's money matters were never so well managed before; he never before was so rich, and yet everybody's claims are satisfied, and every one pleased. I believe a man like Knighton is invaluable to a person like the King, who does not like to be troubled with business. Ah, I remember Knighton in very different circumstances to those he now enjoys. When he first came to London as a physician, he had, of course, to go through the difficulties common to professional men before they become known, and, being a Devonshire man, he used to come frequently to my house. His wife could paint landscape extremely well, and they fancied that she could in that way assist in making the pot boil, but I don't suppose they found it answer much. Knighton used to come to me in very low spirits, saying that he would never get on, and that he saw no chance whatever of being able to do so. 'Yes, you will,' I used to say to him;

'you are made of the right materials, and you have nothing to do but persevere.' 'Oh, but it's so difficult,' he once said, 'to live in the meantime.' 'You must live,' I said to him, 'upon potatoes; they are the cheapest kind of food!' One evening, I remember, he came to my house as usual, and I saw a difference in him the moment he entered the room, and couldn't think what was the cause. There was a different air about him from what I had ever seen. When he sat down in that arm-chair, he threw one of his legs over its arm, to the astonishment of my sister and myself, and said, 'Northcote! you will not see me so much as you have done!' I felt nettled at his manner and speech, and said that it would perhaps have been as well if we had never seen him at all. I had quite misunderstood him, however, and he explained that he thought he was going to be employed at last, and that he had come to tell us, as he thought we should be glad to hear it. 'Oh, and so we are!' I said, 'very glad indeed, but I thought you were tired of us from what you said.' 'Oh, quite the contrary,' he replied; 'I was called in to a Moll Raffles [or some such name]—a favourite of the Marquis of Wellesley—and have been so successful that I am getting into notice.' 'To be sure, you are,' I said; 'you couldn't have a better introduction; these creatures have vast influence, and they are very generous and often very grateful.'

"Well, Knighton never looked behind him again ; he got introduction after introduction till he became physician to the King, and was made a baronet, and now, you know, he is Privy Purse, and I don't know what besides ; he has some other lucrative office, I know, besides being continually with the King. He was here the other day, and when he sat on that sofa, I said, 'Now let me sit down beside a man who sits beside the King !' He said it might sound very fine, but the office had its drawbacks ; it was not so soft a seat as some people might imagine. And poor Lady Knighton ! She is an excellent and most sensible woman, but she is obliged to live the life of a widow, owing to her husband being so occupied about the King ; knowing the importance of his situation to themselves and family, she acquiesces with a good grace, but she must lead a sad, dull life for the present. Knighton is a timid man ; he is sadly afraid of being talked about, or making enemies through envy. It is said he pays the newspaper writers not to mention his name—or at least as little as possible—in their different papers, so that we can believe his seat is not over-soft. I once had a quarrel with Knighton, but we soon became friends again. The dispute, however, was an unpleasant affair, and had occurred over my portrait of Sir Walter Scott. It was Knighton who brought Sir Walter to me and asked me to paint his

portrait, and he made it a stipulation that the picture should not be sent to the Exhibition, as he did not want the King to know anything about it. He explained that he wanted to supply himself with objects of pleasing contemplation in readiness for the time when he should retire from Court ; he wanted to have no gossip about what he was doing, nor did he want the King to ask questions. I represented Sir Walter sitting, and introduced myself into the picture as in the act of painting his portrait. Now I was so pleased with my work that I painted a duplicate of it for myself, and it was this act on my part which caused my quarrel with Knighton. He was alarmed when he knew of the existence of this second picture, for he thought that the precautions he had taken would thus be frustrated. 'What harm can this picture do,' I said to him, 'whilst it remains here in my house ? The King will not come here to see it, I can promise you !' I was quite mortified at being placed in this position. 'Good G—d !' I thought, 'this is hard on me ; he would say that I must not have the least credit, and yet I have painted one of the best pictures I ever did in my life.' Moreover, I thought it a great honour to be on the same canvas with Sir Walter. Knighton continued to insist upon the possession of the duplicate, but it was some time before I submitted to him. I gave way, however, at last, and he paid me for it,

and took it away with him, and thus became possessed of both the pictures."

"You referred just now," said Ward, "to a quality in animals which you say people choose to call instinct. Do you consider that quality to be anything but instinct?"

"What we call instinct in animals," continued Northcote, "we call wisdom in man! We don't like to use the same terms in both cases; we don't like to think that we are only at the head of the monkey tribe. This is mortifying to our pride, and it was this thought that was so very galling to Dean Swift. He couldn't bear to think that he belonged to the monkey species. The monkey is our cousin; at all events, we have all the tricks, and the mischief, and all the devilish activity of that animal, only carried to a greater extent. I say instinct is wisdom, whether you find it in man or animals! It is wonderful how a dog will find his master, even in a mob, and we have no idea of the means that enables the animal to do it; and we also see some men achieve things in a way which is equally unaccountable."

"The great difference," remarked Ward, "between man and the other animals lies in his very superior mental power, as in bodily power they many of them excel us!"

"But," returned Northcote, "we don't know what mental power they many of them have—the

elephant, for instance, which has often shown a surpassing degree of intelligence. However, we must perhaps allow that man has more power in the mental respect than the others—for we do know he has the power to be worse than any of them, which is every day proved."

"I hope," rejoined Ward, "he has the power to be a great deal better too!"

"Why, the pendulum," returned Northcote, "which swings the farthest in one direction, will also swing farthest in the other. But what are the pursuits of man, after all, but frivolity? The art of painting itself, unless it can be proved to be useful in giving employment to the mind and keeping it out of mischief, is a plaything. As far as regards the artist himself, it is merely a case of a child amusing itself with its rattle. No, no! if I had to choose my state of another existence in this world, it should not be that of a man—I would be a lion!"

Ward was greatly amused at this eccentric expression of the gifted Northcote, who, at this time, was nearly eighty years of age. He remained silent, however, and a smile was playing over his features, when his attention was arrested by the dear old painter, who, addressing him in the quietest of tones, said, "Why, I had never known virtue if I had not known animals."

"It is painful to me," said Northcote, a little

later, "to think how very cruelly animals are treated in England. They had no protection previous to the passing of Mr. Martin's Bill. It is dreadful to see how animals are treated in this country, but we are a brutal people! We have some exceptions, however, and, I remember, Horace Walpole left a legacy for the maintenance of a favourite dog; but to do such a thing here, a man almost runs the risk of being considered excommunicated or half-mad. Animals are better treated in Italy, where the Catholic religion interferes in their favour. Every year, on St. Anthony's Day, people in Rome take their animals to a certain place, where, in passing through an archway, they are blessed by the clergy. The Church's interference in this respect is a very good thing, and it is a pity that some persons don't see the great humanity of such a ceremony, and what a beneficial effect it is calculated to have on people's minds in regard to the better and more humane treatment of animals."

## CHAPTER IX

Northcote's antipathy to William Pitt, the younger—In praise of Michael Angelo—Thorwaldsen's want of originality—The Louvre Gallery—On plagiarism—A word concerning Cuyp—Anecdote of Sir Thomas Lawrence—Northcote strongly criticises him—Anecdotes of Sir William Beechey—On Benjamin West—West and the bishops—Northcote on Bonaparte—“I painted him as if I had been painting a god.”

NORTHCOTE had the greatest antipathy to William Pitt, the younger, and expressed himself in extraordinary terms whenever that great statesman was discussed. “That ambitious wretch,” “that excrement, Pitt,” were among the epithets which he would hurl at anybody who contradicted, or even doubted, the strong assertions that he made against him.

James Ward was once staying, in Carlisle, in the house of a Tory gentleman, who was a member of the Pitt Club, and he had occasion to write Northcote relative to some pictures which the latter had in the Carlisle Exhibition that season. Having left his watch upstairs, Ward was without the seal he always made use of, and, being in a hurry, he used a seal that was lying on the inkstand, and which proved, after the impression was made, to be no other than the head of Pitt. He allowed it to go, however, thinking Northcote

would probably never notice it, or if he did would think it was meant as a joke. But Northcote did notice it. "I always pay particular attention," said the painter, when he replied to Ward, "in the letters I receive, to the seal that has been made use of, fancying that it conveys a meaning not included in the letter itself, and was very much astonished at finding yours sealed with *the head of the Devil*. It was certainly, to say the least of it, a very whimsical selection. However, if I am mistaken, and it should prove to be the head of any other flaming personage, I ask his pardon."

When Ward returned to London, the matter had not been forgotten by Northcote, who said that if he had not known him so intimately, he should have taken it for granted that the using of the Pitt seal had been intended as an insult.

Northcote's antipathy to the statesman, however, caused him to express himself upon one occasion, when in the company of persons unknown to him, far too strongly; and he related the unpleasant incident to Ward, asking him to take it as a warning to himself if he should ever feel tempted to make reference to any one in terms of bitterness or extravagance.

"John Jackson was patronised," said Northcote, "for many years by Earl Mulgrave, who frequently went to his house to see what he was about. Jackson had a great fancy to paint my portrait,

and I acceded to his wishes, and went to his house to give him the requisite sittings. Whilst this was going on, Jackson was careful not to show this portrait to Earl Mulgrave; from some conversation with his lordship, he found that he did not like me. One day, however, the street door being open, Lord Mulgrave walked into the painting-room without any warning, and Jackson was unable to turn my portrait to the wall, as he was accustomed to do. His lordship instantly cast his eye on it, and knew it too. He cried out, in an angry tone, 'What's *that*? what's *that*? Let me never see that again! *That's the man who spits in people's faces when they are dying!*'

"Jackson, though exceedingly surprised, did not venture to ask for an explanation, but went quietly and turned the picture round with its face to the wall. He could not be satisfied, however, and felt sure there must be some great misrepresentation or mistake, for he was sure that I, his old friend, was the last man in the world to be guilty of such an outrage. At last, he ventured to ask me if I knew what Lord Mulgrave could mean by such an expression as he had used. I told him I knew no more than he did, for I could assure him I had never done anything of the kind. Jackson said he could easily understand that, and it was quite unnecessary, he said, for me to make such an assertion. However, I couldn't be quite easy, and I cast about in my mind for something

I might possibly have said that could have given rise to such a scandalous imputation. Ah, at length, what had given rise to it flashed upon me all at once! I remembered, that I was at a public dinner in the City a day or two after the death of Pitt. Of course, every one was talking about his death, and I was determined to hold my tongue, for I couldn't trust myself to speak on the subject. This I managed to do for some time, till at last an affected young fool who sat next me began to talk and palaver about Pitt. 'Oh,' said he, among other things, 'what a stupendous, magnificent, and sublime sight it would be to see such a patriot die!' Still, I made no answer. At last, he turned round to me, and said, 'Now, wouldn't you have thought so?' I answered in a great pet, I remember, '*No, I could have spit in his face!*' He had made me so mad with his silly nonsense, that I was simply determined to be as contradictory as possible. Now this remark of mine had been reported till at last it had reached the ears of Lord Mulgrave. Lord! I am such a fool! I speak so very much from passion. How careful we should be in what we say, and especially when we are in a public place and among strangers! Now Pitt was undoubtedly a great genius, but it was on that account that he was unfit to be a Prime Minister, for genius is always accompanied by ambition. He sacrificed everything, I believe, to his boundless

ambition. Lord! I used to doubt with myself whether he was not the Devil in human shape, so great a horror had I of his measures—and yet I saw his great ability. Gahagan,<sup>1</sup> the sculptor, had a bust of him in the Exhibition one year, and I well remember Opie coming up to me and asking if I had seen it, saying, ‘You ought to see that bust, it’s too good a thing to be missed!’ I asked him what it was like. ‘Like!’ exclaimed Opie; ‘why, were all the devils in hell stewed down, and the essence taken, they would not make anything half so horrid as this bust!’ On going down to see it, I found Opie’s account of it not at all exaggerated. I saw Gahagan himself afterwards, and said to him, ‘You have done a mighty work; you have done a bust of Pitt that turns all Michael Angelo’s devils into milk-and-water, indeed Michael Angelo was too good a man to be able to imagine anything half so horrid!’ Gahagan seemed alarmed and said, ‘I do assure you I took nothing but what I saw. Whilst he was sitting to me I certainly was struck with his look, and I did actually think he looked like a devil smiling at the miseries of mankind.’ ‘But did the lip turn up so?’ I remarked, ‘and show one of his teeth?—for this gives it a dreadful look!’ ‘Yes, certainly it did!’ replied Gahagan.

<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Gahagan was for some years an assistant of Joseph Nollekens, R.A., the famous sculptor. The figures of Isis and Osiris, in the front of the Egyptian Hall, London, and the Duke of Kent’s statue in Portland Place, also in the metropolis, were executed by him.

"I mentioned Michael Angelo just now, which reminds me that some little time ago there was exhibited in Pall Mall, by Mr. Day, a cast from the famous figure by Michael Angelo on the tomb of Julius II. ; it was the figure in Roman armour with the head leaning on the hand. The cast is finer than you can have any conception of ; I never saw anything in sculpture before so life-like ; it may indeed be called living stone. It would almost frighten me to be left in the room alone with it, whereas the Belvedere *Apollo* would have no more effect on me in that respect than a log of wood. Oh ! it's a mighty work—filled with mind. Miss Reynolds' observation on her brother's painting, 'What an employment for a man, to be painting ribbons, and lace, and gauze all day !' would not apply to this figure, for the study of such works is certainly manly to all intents and purposes. Yes ! 'tis man's work with a vengeance. Michael Angelo appears to have devoted all his attention to this high quality, this vivid appearance of life, for the marks of the chisel are not even polished away, which shows how little he cared for anything else. I remember Sir Joshua's asking me if I did not think Michael Angelo's statues finer than the antique, when I shook my head by way of dissent, and Sir Joshua said, 'Well, well, you have the world on your side.' However, I should now have no difficulty in agreeing with him. Sir Joshua was himself con-

tinually struggling to give this living appearance, this momentary look to his portraits and other works, and it was this that made them so captivating. Oh! of what vast importance is mind!—it is the want of it which is the great drawback in the present Exhibition; there is a great deal of powerful execution amongst us, but *mind* is wanting. An artist brought me a book of prints after Thorwaldsen, the Danish sculptor, the other day, and he thought they would delight me, whereas I could scarcely bear to look at them. They are exactly the *Venuses* and *Herculeses* we are so harassed with in the antique, and without one original idea in them. If we want such things, we can go to a better shop—we can go to the antique itself! Now, Bernini and Fiamingo had immense originality, whatever their merits might have been in other respects, and it is this quality that has done so much for our own sculptor, Chantrey."

James Ward, having decided to visit Paris for a few weeks' stay, with the special intention of studying in the Louvre, now explained his plans to his friend, and asked him for advice on the subject.

"It is a beneficial thing," said Northcote, "to visit other countries, for it enlarges the mind. You will find Paris a beautiful city; and, then, the gentle manners and the civility of the lower orders are such that you will fancy yourself in Paradise; they are greatly before us in that respect, as well as in many others."

"I thought we were superior to them in almost every other respect!" exclaimed Ward.

"In all that wealth can purchase, we are superior to them, undoubtedly; we have superior accommodations generally, but in those things which wealth cannot purchase, you will find them superior to us in most respects; but we shall see, when you return here, whether you are of my opinion or not!"

"My chief object in going," observed Ward, "is, of course, to study from the works in the Louvre: will my visit be of sufficient service to me as an artist to counterbalance the expense?"

"It unquestionably will, if you know exactly what you want; but if you merely go there to copy, without any particular object in view, I cannot say it will be of much service to you. Now, when I was in Rome I did not copy much; it was only some few things that I particularly wished to have before my eyes as long as I lived that I copied. And I didn't confine my attention to those celebrated pictures which are so well known to every one, but I hunted about in little obscure churches, and places where no one else thought of going, and I did many beautiful things that I made sketches and memorandums of, and which I have since made great use of; for not being known to others, they became my own property exclusively. I flatter myself that I knew what I wanted, and that was no small matter.

I have introduced into my own pictures many a thing from the collection I then made."

"Why, that is plagiarism!" exclaimed Ward.

"If you can find anything and turn it to a better account," continued Northcote, "it becomes your own property; you have proved your right to it: or, if you turn it to a different purpose from what it is applied to in the original, and it answers well, it then becomes your own also. Now, when you cannot do this, or rather either of these, it is stealing, and then only!"

"I don't agree with you," remarked Ward, "for if you take an attitude from Titian, say, and turn it to a better account than he did, or to a different account, it is no longer Titian's, but your own!"

"Certainly!" rejoined Northcote; "you know what Sir Joshua says on this subject in one of his discourses when speaking of Raphael, don't you?"

"Yes, and I was struck with it as most acute reasoning, though my mind has never been quite satisfied."

"Why not?"

"I am not quite prepared for you and cannot exactly give my reasons; but if I took a man's hat off his head, no judge or jury would say I had a right to it, even though I might make a better use of it than the owner had done!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Northcote; "but that's an affair of property, you know! That is quite a

different thing. In the case I have been speaking of, you don't run away with the picture itself; you only copy a thought from it, and if you add to it, or turn it to a different purpose, it becomes an original thought, and is consequently your own to all intents and purposes."

Northcote now produced a book containing the studies to which he had been referring.

"Some of them," records Ward, "were finished copies in water-colours; they were, most of them, extremely beautiful, and captivating to a high degree. I saw that this sagacious old man had also been a sagacious young man, and that, instead of running in the hackneyed track of the travelling artist, he had thought for himself profoundly, and had acted accordingly." . . .

Ward was absent in Paris for three months. Upon returning to London he lost no time in proceeding to Northcote's, and showing the famous painter the studies that he had made in the Louvre. These studies were very small oil-sketches, many of them from Titian's portraits, and two of them from pictures by Cuyp.

Northcote examined with great interest the sketches from Titian, and said they would be most valuable to Ward in the work which he had to do. He then looked at the sketches from Cuyp, and said, "What did you do these for?"

"They had a beautiful tone of colour," replied

Ward, "and Wilkie stood over me whilst I was busy with one of them; he told me to be very careful in getting the true effect in regard to light and shade and colour, and remarked that it was a great favourite with him."

"Oh! but there is no elevation of mind in these!" exclaimed Northcote, handing back to Ward the sketches from Cuyp. "Let us look at one of those of Titian's again!"

He then looked attentively at one of the sketches from Titian; it was the portrait of a man attired in a black dress, with one arm a kimbo, and the other hand resting on the hilt of his sword.

"What solemn grandeur is here!" said Northcote. "Lord, what a look! And yet it is so simple that there appears to be no art in it. Ay, ay, Titian was a mighty man!"

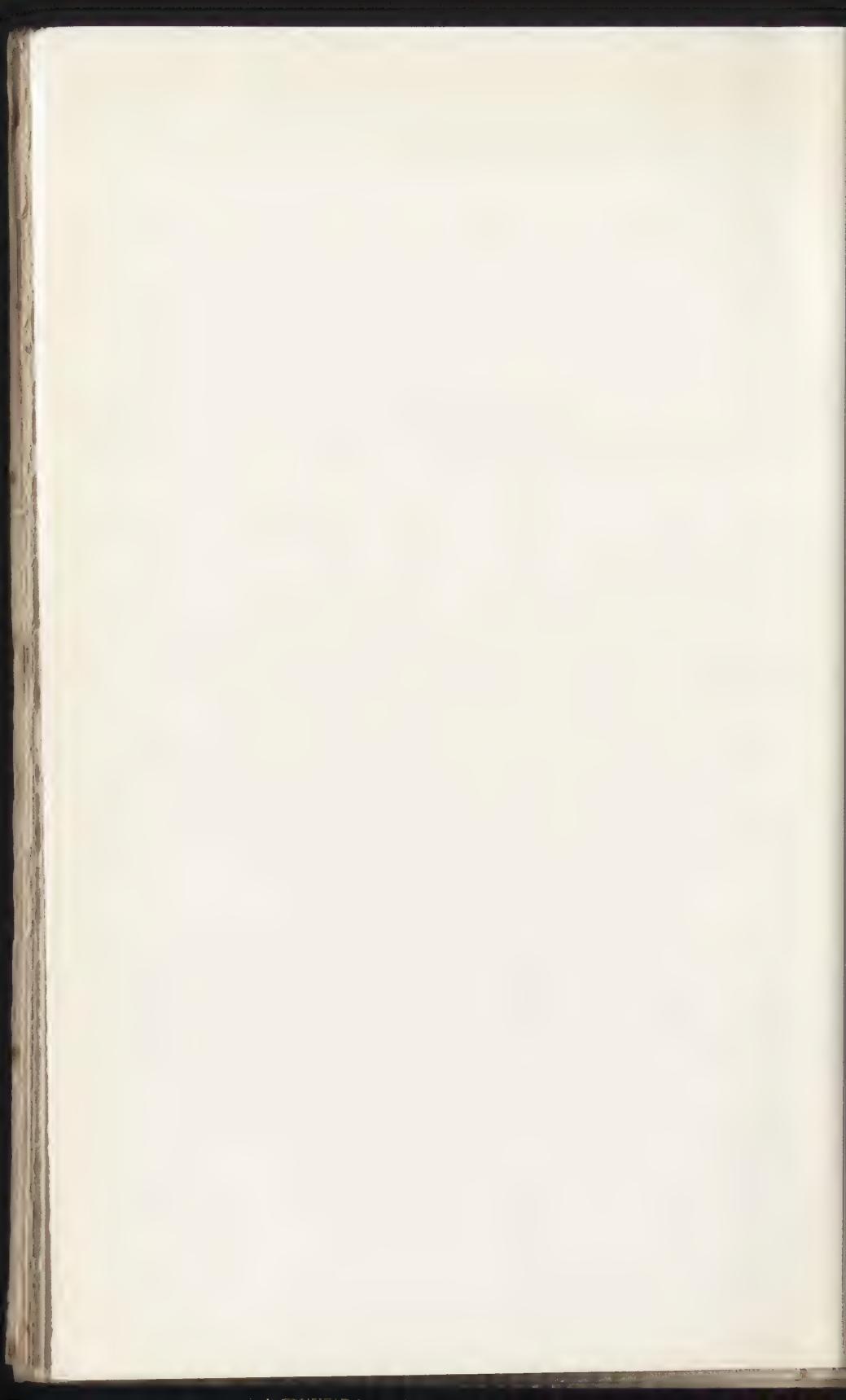
"The expression of the eyes in that portrait," said Ward, "was so penetrating that I felt in some degree ashamed in looking at it, as if I had been staring in the face of a living person. Sir Thomas Lawrence, who was painting the portraits of the King (Charles X.) and the Dauphin at the Palace of Saint Cloud, came to the Louvre somewhat frequently whilst I was there, and that was the only picture he noticed, walking directly to it when he came in, and then walking directly out again when he left this portrait."

"How odd that is!" said Northcote. "Why, his



SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE, P.R.A.

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE NATIONAL GALLERY



things have not the slightest trace of the quality that distinguishes this portrait, either in the mental part or character, or in the mode of execution. He must, I think, have been acting a part, for if he really felt so strongly, some little would come out in his own pictures ; he couldn't keep it in if he wished. No, no, Sir Thomas Lawrence, this (*referring to the original*) is a hitch beyond you!"

"I was painting," said Ward, "in the Louvre one day, when an elderly lady looked over what I was doing, and seeing, I suppose, that I was an Englishman, she entered into conversation with me. She asked me if I knew Sir Thomas Lawrence. I answered, I did, and added that he was in Paris at present. 'Oh, where?' she asked ; 'for I want above all things to see him.' 'He is at the Palace of St. Cloud, painting the King and the Dauphin.' 'Oh!' she said, 'but one cannot go to him there,—and yet, I must see him, for he has had a portrait in hand for me for upwards of twenty-one years, and I think you will agree with me that it is time I should have it.' 'Is it a portrait of yourself, madam?' I asked. 'Oh, no,' she said ; 'but it is that of a dear friend, who died six years ago. The head is finished, I believe. I have gone to Sir Thomas's house again and again, and teased him with letters till I was tired, but all in vain ; and, latterly, I could not even see the picture when I went, for it was put beyond a mass of others, and

could not be got at. However, one day not many weeks ago, I went to the house, determined that I would not leave till I had seen the portrait. Sir Thomas was engaged, as usual, and sent out many apologies by his servant, requesting that I would call again, as it would be extremely inconvenient to hunt out the picture at that moment. Well, well, I said, looking round the room, there seem to be pretty good accommodations in this house. Tell your master that I will take up my abode here until he can find my picture, for I am determined not to go away till I have seen it.' 'And did you succeed, madam?' I asked. 'Oh, yes!' she said; 'they were not long in finding it when they were given to understand that they must either do so or have a lodger. But when I shall get the picture home, I know not, for Sir Thomas promises anything!'"

"Now, how disgraceful this is!" said Northcote; "it's enough to put the whole nation out of love with painters, and with the art itself. It's shocking, and yet I have no doubt that Lawrence got half the pay the first sitting. I myself have heard of people threatening to go to law with him for doing this, and yet he goes on commencing new portraits, and taking the half pay as usual. Thank God, I am not in that situation! people can't say I ever did that, whatever they may say of me. My friends sometimes speak to me in praise of the ability and popularity of Lawrence, but I sometimes lose my

patience with them, for although I will acknowledge that he possesses certain qualities, I consider him as a sort of man-milliner painter—a meteor of fashion—and I feel quite certain that posterity will estimate him much as I do now. I once had a somewhat peculiar illustration of this popularity of Lawrence. Some years ago I painted the portrait of Sir Robert Peel—a very sensible and worthy man, and quite devoid of that upstart swagger that I hate so much. One day this very portrait of Peel was brought back to my house for the purpose of either having a duplicate made from it, or being varnished, and my servant, upon presenting it to me, said he was ordered to request that the picture should be taken great care of, 'as the family thought almost as much of it as if Sir Thomas Lawrence himself had painted it.' Such a message as that offended my feelings. 'Ah!' I said to my servant, 'you may tell them I shall be sure to take care of the picture; but not because they think it almost as good as a 'Sir Thomas Lawrence,' for I don't thank them for that compliment; but I will take care of it, say, because I think it a great deal better, and because—I painted it myself!'"

"When Lawrence," said Ward, "painted the portrait of George the Fourth, he showed it to Constable, who described it to me. The King was represented as sitting on a sofa, with his arms thrown over the back of it. Constable told me

that he had considerable difficulty in restraining from laughter when Lawrence was showing him the picture, as the attitude had such a blustering pomposity about it."

"Oh!" exclaimed Northcote, "then he copied it from Sir Joshua's *Sir William Hamilton*! But how deceptive this mode of copying attitudes is, for they frequently come out the direct contrast of what is intended, which seems to have been the case in the portrait you mention. Now, Sir Joshua always let nature give the hint, and then he generally followed it up successfully; thus in the case of Master Crewe—a fat, bluff-looking boy—he represented him as a young Henry the Eighth. Lawrence frequently paints in a little manner, which is a critique that would have annihilated Sir Joshua had he found it made with any degree of justice on his pictures. Lawrence has been trying at Sir Joshua's playfulness in his whole-length of Lady Jersey, but it doesn't do! In the one case it was the result of feeling; in the other it is no more than mimicry, like the clown attempting to imitate the agility of the harlequin. I have seen a whole-length portrait by Lawrence of the Duchess of Newcastle, in which he has introduced part of a clumsy picture-frame in the left-hand corner of the background;—as a whole, it is very poor, and it is the engraver's laughing-stock. No! Lawrence cannot paint whole-lengths; they are beyond his

power, though he does many things so well. His bits of light in the corners of his pictures are wrong, as they injure the effects of his heads ; they are not nature. Whatever part of nature you take, it always comes right. Sir Joshua would have called the portrait with the bit of picture-frame sticking in the corner 'a boy's work.' Lawrence's heads want roundness as well, for the back part of the head is almost as near as the nose ; they seem done too much by piecemeal, there's no greatness of style in them. Now, Sir Joshua, whatever his defects might be, was far beyond Lawrence in this respect, and also in originality and invention out of sight : Sir Joshua was always surprising one with novelties, whereas Lawrence never does it. I think Lawrence's defect lies chiefly in the mental part of his work—he lacks mind—for his execution is clever ; I cannot help thinking that his habit of making drawings has been of great use to him, for his executive power is really so great. Sir Joshua made few drawings, but I have one by him in my possession that is very fine. Lawrence's ladies are certainly very beautiful, especially two which he showed me the other day, as well as some drawings of ladies, which were still more beautiful and most exquisitely executed. What a mistake, by the way, was that which he made at the Royal Academy dinner previous to the opening of the Exhibition ! He placed Prince Esterhazy, the

Austrian Ambassador, on his right hand, probably by way of showing him respect in return for civilities received from the Prince when abroad. This gave umbrage to the Russian Ambassador, for, having been longer in this country, he should have taken precedence, according to a rule of etiquette established among the foreign Ministers themselves to avoid disputes. Prince Esterhazy had, in consequence, to change his seat, as it was found, after a great consultation, that there was no other way out of the dilemma. At the Academy dinner, the Ambassadors formerly used to be placed at a table by themselves, but subsequently they requested to be intermixed with the company, and quite right too, for what society can there be between a set of men who are placed as spies on each other? The unpleasant incident arose from a mistake on the part of Sir Thomas Lawrence. He ought to have recollected that he was only in the chair as the representative of the Royal Academy, and therefore had no power in that place to confer favours on his own friends. A Bishop of Exeter once went to Plymouth, and the mayor of the town at that time was doubtful whether he should not give up his seat to him; this was a great mistake, for the mayor, as the representative of Royalty, could not give up his seat to any one, not even to members of the Royal Family."

"I was recently introduced," observed Ward, "to

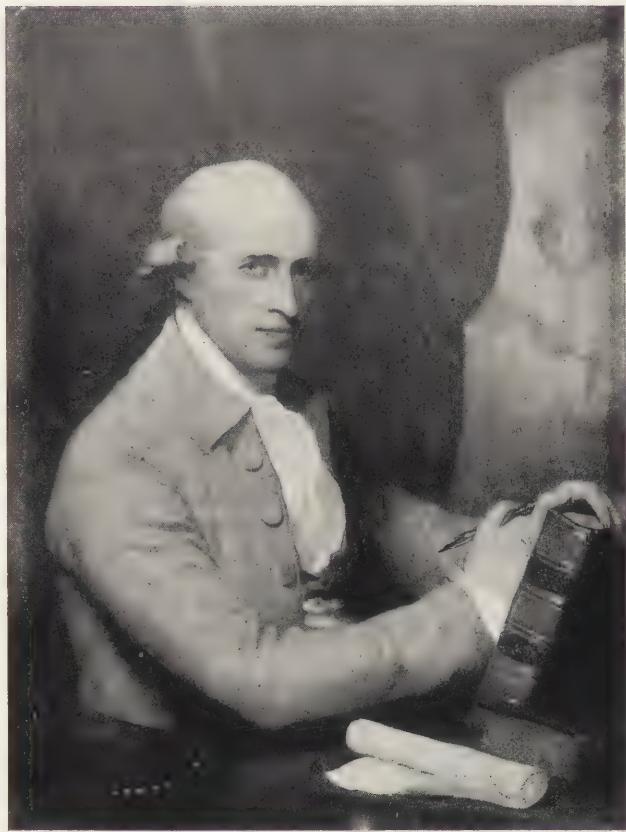
Sir William Beechey, and I was somewhat surprised at my not finding him the fine gentleman I had expected in a 'Sir William.' "

"Oh, no," said Northcote, laughing; "he is not that, certainly. His manners are coarse, but I have always considered Beechey to be a very honest man, and he is a very good-natured man, too. He has fought his way in the world exceedingly well, and brought up a family in a manner very creditable to himself; but having risen from a low station—I don't know if he was not a house-painter at first—he is not very polished. He amused the Royal Family, when painting their portraits, by his total ignorance of Court etiquette; they were every hour amused with his blunders in that respect, which seemed, however, to give him no concern; he was so totally concerned with what he was about, that he seemed to think such things of no moment whatever. When Queen Charlotte was sitting to him, he entertained the Court ladies by the homely way in which he conversed. One day, after the Queen had sat very still, and Beechey had been working hard for a long time, she said, 'Now, Mr. Beechey, we will rest a little!' and, leaning back in her chair, she took a pinch of snuff. Beechey, upon seeing the box, exclaimed, 'God bless your Majesty! I have been dying for a pinch this last hour!' and took a good pinch from the box at once, without the least ceremony."

"I myself can also tell you," said Ward, "a story with regard to the free-and-easy manner that Beechey adopted in the presence of Royalty. The King was once sitting to him, and the conversation turned upon Sir Joshua, whom Beechey much adored. The King, in his hurried manner, shouted out, 'I don't like that Reynolds! I don't like Reynolds!' 'Oh! why, your Majesty?' responded Beechey. 'Because,' the King replied, 'he paints *red* trees! paints *red* trees!' Beechey did his best to assure his Royal sitter that some kinds of trees turn very red indeed in the autumn. 'No! never *red*, never *red*!' ejaculated his Majesty, hastily, and Beechey made no reply. But, taking his quiet walk in the evening through the park, Beechey discovered a branch that was almost as red as vermillion. He brought back with him a cutting from the branch, and laid it down in the painting-room, and then retired in the hope that early on the morrow his Majesty would be convinced that his favourite Sir Joshua had done nothing but what Nature had authorised him to do. Upon entering the painting-room the following morning, the eyes of the King immediately rested on the *red* branch lying there on the table. He turned, however, upon Beechey such a look of displeasure that the painter was afraid to utter, either then or afterwards, another word about it."

"Oh! this is extremely likely," said Northcote,





BENJAMIN WEST, P.R.A.

FROM THE PAINTING BY GILBERT STUART IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

"though I never heard the anecdote before. You must not hold arguments with Royalty, nor attempt to convince them that they have been wrong; this will never do; they must always be in the right, whatever they choose to say! Beechey was knighted, of course, because he painted the portraits of the King and Queen, but I don't consider him a fine painter. He sometimes does some very pretty things, but his general style is wishy-washy and feeble. To be sure, his ladies' portraits are very prettily coloured, and have a rather evanescent look, which prevents them from appearing coarse and vulgar;—there are pictures in the world I like much worse than Beechey's!"

"Benjamin West would certainly have received a knighthood, but being a Quaker he could not accept the honour. I have always thought there was something grand in his position on that account, for he was thus placed in a position above receiving honours or titles, even from the King. Now West was happy in possessing his own good opinion; he used to call me Caravaggio,<sup>1</sup> and thought himself Raphael! But I used to tell him that he was Carlo Maratti, and made up of the sweepings of the Italian schools. West was a learned painter, for he knew all that had been done in the art from the beginning; he was exactly what is called 'the schools' in painting, for he did

<sup>1</sup> Northcote was supposed to have borrowed his light and shade largely from Caravaggio.

everything by rule, and could give you chapter and verse for every touch he put on the canvas. He was on that account the best possible teacher, because he could tell why and wherefore everything was to be done. But though he had little or no originality, he managed nevertheless to make up his nest exceedingly well. He was an American royalist, which was one great reason, I believe, why he was all along such a mighty favourite with the King (George III.). When he went to Rome to study, he was introduced to the old Cardinal Albani, who was blind, and who, upon being told that he was from America, fancied he must be an aboriginal Indian, and consequently a savage, for he asked if he spoke any language. Upon being told that West spoke English, the blind old Cardinal was greatly pleased, and, calling upon him to approach near to him, he passed his hand over his features, and exclaimed, in Latin, 'Ah, fair young man! handsome fellow!'

"West used to tell an interesting anecdote which I shall be glad to relate to you. He had been commissioned by the old King to paint a series of Scripture subjects, and a certain day was appointed upon which he was to take his sketches for these pictures to the King for his inspection. He accordingly went down with them one day to the Palace, but he was a good deal startled, upon being shown into a room there, to find it filled

with bishops, who had been specially sent for—he soon discovered—to attend on this particular occasion. The King, who was very punctual, soon came into the room in his usual hurried manner. He commanded West to explain to the bishops his intentions in those sketches, and his various reasons for them—a thing that West was mighty capable of doing, for he was fond of talking. The King kept smiling whilst the painter was speaking, and, at the conclusion, said, with an air of triumph, 'You see how well *he* understands these things, for whilst you bishops have been spending your time amongst heathen fables, he has been studying his Bible!' Now West, having been brought up a Quaker, knew nothing of heathen mythology; if indeed he knew anything at all of it, he had to learn it after he became a painter. I could never bear the heathen mythology! I was never able to get through Pope's Homer. I have always looked upon their Jupiter as nothing but an abominable blackguard, stained with every vice and crime that can well be imagined; and, indeed, I look upon all the heathen deities as a pack of wretches that would not be endured in any civilised society. I suppose one cause of my strong disrelish for them was my never having been accustomed in my youth to read anything of the kind, for I was brought up in Cromwellian strictness; and I am convinced that we owe much of our likes and dislikes in after-life

to early associations. That, I think, is the reason why men who have had what they call a classical education, feel so differently in this respect from what I do. Early influences and associations cling to us to the end. I was brought up in a seaport town, and the earlier part of my life was spent there;—the waving of a flag, or the beating of the sea, or similar effects, are still among the most delightful things to me." . . .

"Early in 1815," observed Ward, "I used to see advertisements in different parts of London, announcing that the portrait of Bonaparte on horse-back, which you yourself had painted, was to be seen in a certain room—'Bonaparte with his head downwards,' the advertisement said—and the charge for admission to the exhibition was a shilling. Some time before, I had seen the selfsame portrait at an auction room, and had been greatly struck with it; but if it had been the finest portrait by Titian, no one would have dared to purchase it at that period, for fear of being called a traitor to his country."

"I suppose —— fancies he can make a few shillings," said Northcote, "by exhibiting this portrait. It is a piece of foolery on his part. If he can make anything out of it, I have no objection, as it does not affect my reputation as a painter."

"But," interrupted Ward, "to think of anyone paying a shilling to see a picture turned upside down is beyond my comprehension!"

“Oh! the English,” continued Northcote, “have done many things as foolish as that; we can play the fool excellently well when we are in the humour: 'tis our bigotry that causes all this, and we are encouraged in it to the utmost by interested persons. My portrait of Bonaparte has been sadly kicked about since I painted it!”

“But I wonder,” observed Ward, “you should have painted it at all!”

“Oh, but I thought so highly of him at that time, that I painted him as if I had been painting a god; he was so handsome, too (and that was no small matter with me), before he grew so fat. His face was almost perfectly handsome at one time, though his chin was the least perfect part of it. He was a person of great abilities, and might have done great things for the French nation. I thought he was going to do so, but when he stuck the crown on his head, then I had done with him, then I saw that he was a selfish creature, as bad as those he was fighting against: I saw that there was no good going to come of him. . . . He was always very firm, and accustomed to be obeyed. When about to set out once on one of his campaigns, he visited the Louvre Gallery, and, noticing an unevenness in the flooring, he said, ‘Let this be levelled before I return!’ He was told by the workman he had sent for, that the work could not be done, upon which, without making any other reply, he repeated

the order, and upon his return he found it had been carried out. And this reminds me of Lord St. Vincent. He wanted something done on board his ship, and was told it was impossible. ‘Pooh!’ he exclaimed, ‘all things are possible on board a man-of-war!’—and the thing was done.

“If Titian, Vandyke, and Sir Joshua had all been alive at the same time, I wonder which of them would have painted the best portrait of Bonaparte! It is dreadfully difficult to decide. Now Titian would have given him a grandeur bordering on the terrible; Vandyke, an elegance bordering on dandyism; Sir Joshua would have lost none of the sweetness of his character. Upon the whole, Titian, I think, would be my choice. Sir Joshua would, I think, come next, as I could tell beforehand fairly well what he would do, whereas Vandyke might perhaps do one that I should not at all like. Oh, how much depends on the judgment of a painter in knowing what moment to seize, and what qualities to make sure of!—in short, in knowing what to choose out of the abundance which nature offers him.”





THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A.

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE ROYAL ACADEMY

## CHAPTER X

A word concerning Gainsborough—Northcote strongly criticises the Royal Academy—The picture-frames sent to the Exhibitions—Sir Joshua's reticent manner of speaking—Northcote speaks about his own conversational powers—Riches not always a barrier to true enterprise: instance of Sir Joseph Banks—“Painters nowadays give themselves airs”—On false pride: a word concerning John Jackson and Henry Thomson—Anecdote of the Duke of Clarence and the grocer's wife—On the conceit of certain painters: instances of Battoni and Raphael Mengs—The position of painters in England—The breakdown of William Owen, the portrait-painter—The envy of wealthy persons towards each other.

“SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS,” said Northcote to Ward, one evening, “had a high opinion of Gainsborough, and very justly, but Gainsborough and he could not stable their horses together, for there was jealousy between them. Gainsborough, I remember, solicited Sir Joshua to sit to him for his portrait, and he no doubt expected to be requested to sit to Sir Joshua in return. But I heard Sir Joshua say, ‘I suppose he expects me to ask him to sit to me; I shall do no such thing!’ Sir Joshua had a paralytic stroke which interrupted the painting of his portrait; when he recovered, he sent word to Gainsborough that he was ready to resume his sittings, but the latter declined to take it up again, having found out, I suppose, that his contrivance did not take.”

"How did Gainsborough act in regard to the Academy?" asked Ward.

"He never came near it! He was too proud and satirical; he was not a person to be managed by such a set. I believe the only time he attended, was to try to get Garvey admitted—an unworthy errand, certainly. He once sent some portraits to the Exhibition, but would not submit to the regulation of hanging all portraits of a certain size above a certain height, or what we call 'above the line.' He directed that his portraits should be hung exactly so many feet from the ground; but the Academy would not break through their regulations, so he cursed them all, and sent for his pictures home again, declaring that they should never see another of his there.

"Gainsborough was a genius. Some men find fault with Sir Joshua's bringing in Gainsborough as an example of genius, instead of Wilson. Now, surely Gainsborough was much more to the purpose; he was exactly what is meant by a genius, being totally unlike what had ever been seen before. Think of his *View of the Mall in St. James's Park!* What an exquisite thing! And yet it was made from what others could see nothing in. His whole-length portrait of Queen Charlotte is equally fine; with what a graceful sweep she seems to move through the picture! 'Tis actual motion, and done with such a light, airy facility. Oh! it delighted me

when I saw it. The drapery was done in one night by Gainsborough and his nephew, Gainsborough Dupont; they sat up all night, and painted it by lamp-light. This, in my opinion, constitutes the essence of genius, the making beautiful things from unlikely subjects. Wilson was classical, and excellent in his way, but then he was built on the Italian school; he was not original like Gainsborough. Sir Joshua, I know, looked upon Gainsborough with high jealousy, but with profound respect.

“We were speaking of the Academy just now, and I may tell you that a certain painter called here to-day to solicit my vote for the ensuing election of Associates. I asked him why he wished to become a member of the Academy, and he said that, among other advantages, it ensured a man good places for his works in the annual exhibition. I assured him that it would certainly do that, if he would become the tool of the ruling party, and submit to everything. It has certainly not procured me good places for my pictures, but I was never one who could bring myself to be the tool of any party. I was one that would neither lead nor drive. Ah, pride is a dreadful thing, except you have got some back-bone! To be sure, it preserves a man—it keeps him, although, like salt meat, he is rendered unpalatable by it. I remember on a former occasion

a painter used to come and solicit my vote for the Academy, and I used to have great debates with him on the subject. I used to say to him, 'Why do you desire so much to be in the Academy? You must be aware that none but the lame require crutches!' 'Ah, but it was such an honour!' he would say. And I told him that if he wanted to gain honours in that way, he was unfit to be elected; the Academy, I told him, wants men who will confer honour on the establishment, and not persons who look to it for their honours: if none but the latter were chosen, don't you see what it would come to?—I said, 'Do you think Wilkie gains any honour from the Academy? No!—but the Academy is honoured by his belonging to it. 'Tis a few such men as he, who preserve it from becoming a by-word and a laughing-stock, for, like all other corporate bodies, it has a strong tendency towards its own ruin; it contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction.' Ah, yes; the best men are too much absorbed in the art, and, besides, are of too gentle a nature to take a sufficient part in the scramble; so that it will generally be governed by the base, the intriguing, the incompetent in art, for to such men it is everything; it is the source from which they derive all their credit in society. It is here that the injustice of the thing lies, for I tell you that it is but a few men of talent who support the

credit of the whole body. Opie was so sensible, indeed, of this, that he was constantly breaking out against the Academy, saying, 'I wish we could contrive some means to knock it up!' However, that would not be right either, for the Academy has its uses. The Exhibition gives every man an opportunity of appearing before the public and having his merits judged; and, besides, it supplies means of instruction for the young painters."

"But I have often heard you say," interrupted Ward, "that the Exhibition generated a tawdry, flaring style, and that you were afraid the art would be put out by it!"

"Why, so it does! Everything brings its good and bad consequences, and that point you have mentioned is certainly the drawback of the Exhibition. The schools have also a bad tendency; they produce a commonplace manner, which is most ruinous to art, but it does not follow that they are to be done away with on that account; individuals must take care of themselves; an opportunity is afforded them, and if they abuse it, 'tis their own concern. To be sure, the flaring gaudiness of our exhibitions has gone its utmost length, not only in the pictures, but in the frames as well; 'tis Lawrence who has brought up this fashion of having such expensive frames. I do assure you Sir Joshua had nothing of this, for the frames in which he sent his fancy pictures were not above two inches in depth;

and his portraits were sent in such frames as his sitters provided for them. And Sir Joshua's frames went year after year; one frame in particular, I remember, had gone so often that it might almost have found its way to the Exhibition alone, and it had become so black that you could scarcely have known that it had ever been gilt."

"But a good frame," observed Miss Northcote, "tends to greatly improve the appearance of a picture!"

"To be sure it does," continued her brother; "so much so that a common sign would look well in such frames as are now sent to the Exhibition, and I can only say that it's a piece of quackery that was never thought of by Sir Joshua."

"They tell me," said Northcote, a little later, "that Collins<sup>1</sup> professes to think his rank of R.A. is equal to a patent of nobility; heaven knows, I think no great deal of either the membership of the Royal Academy or the nobility, considering how both ranks are generally obtained! I am far from thinking it any honour to belong to the Academy, for, like all public bodies, it has become a nest of vermin. I am now sorry that I ever belonged to it at all, and I admire Romney's conduct in having kept himself aloof from it. One reason why I dislike the Academy is because of that nasty

<sup>1</sup> William Collins (1788-1847), subject painter, father of Wilkie Collins, the novelist.

feeling which the French call *esprit de corps*; I respect and like many of the members as individuals, but I dislike them as a body, for collectively they have an insolence about them that is insufferable to me; and, what is still worse, those members who have the least pretensions have always the most of this impudence. There are only about half-a-dozen good men, and then come in the scum: but I suppose it is just the same in all corporate bodies; we in the Academy are not worse than others. How Farington used to rule the Academy! He was the great man to be looked up to on all occasions; all applicants must gain their point through him. But he was no painter; he cared nothing at all about pictures; his great passion was the love of power—he loved to rule. He did it, of course, with considerable dignity; but he had an untamable spirit, which, I suppose, was due to the fact that he had lost the game as a painter, and that it was too late to mend the matter. Oh! it's a dreadful thing to find your opportunity gone, and to find no time to retrieve it!

“I have been speaking somewhat strongly about the Academy; if I had not held the views that I do, I could have occupied a higher rank than I enjoy. I have made sacrifices, and have not won the game!”

“As far as is compatible with your disposition and character,” said Ward, “you have gained a

high rank in the art without sacrificing your independence in the smallest degree, and you have spent your time in a manner most suitable to your taste and feelings. Why, to rise by manœuvre and policy, as is generally the way by which men do rise, is what you could never have submitted to!"

"I have made a great sacrifice," continued Northcote. "My brother used to tell me that I had thrown myself away, and that I ought to have been at the head of my profession."

"But you have lived," observed Ward, "like a philosopher—a much grander thing than if you had been at the head of all the Academies in Europe."

"Ah!" exclaimed Northcote, shaking his head, "you are leading me to the case of Diogenes and Alexander the Great—but that will not do. Had I been Alexander, I would have told Diogenes, 'You have lost the game and I have won it; I have got that for which you have been striving, and you are still in your tub! You have been beaten, put what face you will upon it!' Now Sir Joshua Reynolds was wiser in this respect than I have been; he knew, for instance, that the tub would not do for him, and he laid himself out to gain what he wanted. Oh! he was a most sagacious man."

"Sir Joshua's conversation regarding art matters," said Ward, "would have been highly interesting had it been preserved!"

"There was none to preserve! I have given, in my *Life* of him, all that I ever heard. He never conversed. If he made an observation, he did it in a hasty, half-pettish manner, and seemed to employ as few words as he could. I once observed to him that Sir Godfrey Kneller seemed to have used vermilion in his faces—Sir Joshua having always used lake, which faded, and I had been talking to him about it—and all that he answered was, 'What signifies what a man used, who could not colour!' Then again, for instance, Miss Reynolds once said to him, 'Brother, I wonder what is become of all Jervas' pictures that we never see any of them?' and he answered, sharply, 'Because they are all in the garret.' These are specimens of Sir Joshua's conversations. He didn't wish to shine in conversation; he had another object in view, and had no time for talking."

"I have known you now many years," said Ward, "and your own conversation has always been a great delight to me; indeed, it surprises me that you have not exhausted your ideas, so as to have nothing new to say, but this is far from being the case."

"But there is a reason," continued Northcote, "for that; you know there are two classes of characters in the world—two sorts of minds which I may call the external and the internal. I might express myself better, perhaps, by drawing a com-

parison between a reservoir, and a fountain or spring. Men who have a good memory frequently collect considerable stores; these are the external class; their stores will work out and be exhausted, like the water contained in a mere reservoir. But there are those who speak from their own observations and their own feelings; their stock is continually being renewed, like the waters of a fountain, and consequently will to a certain extent be inexhaustible. Now, I am far from arrogating to myself this latter quality—which it would ill become me to do—but you must see, that from being daily occupied in the pursuit of art, my mind must be at work more or less intensely as the case may demand, and also from its being the employment of my own choice; I panted after it long before I could manage to adopt it as my calling in life, and it is natural that my mind should dwell upon it with more pleasure. I really think nothing could ever have diverted me from the pursuit of art! Had I been ever so rich, I think I must have adopted it and gone on with it. But, then, I would have gone on in a very different manner from what I have done: I would have had the very best accommodations as a painter, and would have kept a great table, as Sir Joshua did; I would have entertained all the great characters I could have got to my house."

"I cannot help thinking," interrupted Ward, "that

riches at an early period of your life would have drawn you away from the practice of the art!"

"I think not; I have a notion that my love for it was not to be overcome by any pleasure on earth. There have been instances, you know, of young men of fortune devoting themselves to arduous undertakings. There was Sir Joseph Banks, who was a fine example of this! He was in the actual possession of a large fortune when he set out with Captain Cook on his voyage round the world; he might have lived at ease as a country gentleman, but he preferred braving dangers and encountering privations to the enjoyment of all the comforts he might have had at home. To be sure, he rose much higher by so doing than he otherwise would have done; he became a sort of sovereign in his way, and his house was the rendezvous of all the great characters of his time. No! riches don't always prevent exertion, or deter men from encountering dangers and grappling with difficulties! Who could encounter more than Sir Joseph Banks did? He ran great risks in setting out with such an expedition; he might not only have been killed, but eaten into the bargain; what is still worse, he might have been tortured to death. Now, surely, if he could brave such dangers, I might have encountered the difficulties of the art, aided—as I should have been—by the best accommodations and assistances with which wealth could have supplied me!"

"But it is not always necessary," observed Ward, "to be possessed of wealth in order to obtain all these things! There is Haydon, who, though he has no fortune of his own, has accommodated himself with everything an artist can want, such as the most expensive prints, casts, and lay figures; he has a noble painting-room besides, and all this, I suppose, is from borrowed money!"

"Why, I think he is right," said Northcote, "in so doing, that is, if he has done it with an honest intention, and has a reasonable probability of being able to repay what he has borrowed. Too much of life will generally be spent before a man can obtain these things by the fruits of his own labour. Now I might have benefited myself in this way, but I could never condescend to be in debt; this was what I never could endure the thoughts of, let the consequences be what they might. A man certainly has not a fair chance in competition with his fellows, except he can have a proper painting-room, models, etc. Had Haydon confined himself to these luxuries, he would not have been to blame; but then his arrogance and impudence made him dreadfully disgusting to me! I know not how it is, but painters nowadays give themselves airs they never thought of doing when I was young. I think it must be the Academy that causes all this. They are—some of them—great men there; within a very small sphere, heaven

knows, but still it makes some of them swagger exceedingly. I was surprised the other evening with an instance of this, and in a quarter, too, where I did not expect it. Jackson was sitting with me here, when poor Dutteran, the painter, came in with two portraits by Sir Joshua in his hand, which he had kindly brought to show me, and this he did to both of us in the humblest and politest manner possible. But Jackson, to my surprise, took not the least notice either of him or of the pictures, but sat up stiff and straight, and looked quite the great man, I assure you. Oh! but I was disgusted! A painter is a painter, whether poor or rich; that surely makes no difference in his rank. Jackson little knew to which of them I gave the superiority, and how contemptible he appeared in my eyes at that moment. Now, such behaviour is a monstrous indication of vulgarity! Ah! I used to think Jackson an angel, but how very cunning he must be! He seemed, at one time, to care nothing for the Academy when with me, and expressed no eagerness to become a member, yet he was straining every nerve all the while, I now find. I recollect a great change in his manner after he had attained his object, and my sister observed it too; it was the first time he called after his election, and he gave himself airs which astonished us. Oh, but it's a poor thing to be elated with, and he will find that out some day!

“ How far Sir Joshua was removed from such nasty assumption I need not tell you ; the fine example of modesty which he exhibited had an effect on all the inferior painters of his day ; but there is not one now to serve as a model in point of good breeding.”

“ I believe,” said Ward, “ that Thomson<sup>1</sup> is thinking of retiring into the country and giving up painting !”

“ Ah, he never seemed to me,” replied Northcote, “ to paint *con amore*, as the Italians say ; a man to do any good must be on fire with his studies. Thomson seemed to have bad health, and to be dissatisfied, which I suspect was owing to his taking too little pleasure in his work. If a painter hasn’t sufficient delight in the art to counterbalance the rubs he will meet with from the world, he is in a wretched position, especially in this country, where nothing but money is worshipped. If he thinks he is to be treated with a reverential respect —as a painter is in Rome, and indeed all over Italy—he will be sadly deceived.”

“ Now I suspect,” said Ward, “ that something like this explains Thomson’s case, for Jackson once told me how greatly disgusted Thomson was with a fellow-painter, who had accosted him in a familiar manner by calling him ‘ Thomson,’ as if they had been equals.”

<sup>1</sup> Henry Thomson, R.A. (1773-1843), historical painter, was the son of a purser in the navy. In 1825 he was appointed Keeper of the Academy, but two years afterwards his health broke down ; he resigned office and retired to Portsea, where he died sixteen years later.

"And so they were as to rank!" exclaimed Northcote.

"Oh, but Thomson is a member of the Royal Academy, which the other is not!"

"Ah! if that's the only difference between them," returned Northcote, "they are pretty much on a par in my opinion. This puts me in mind of an anecdote I have heard of the Duke of Clarence's visit to Plymouth after he was grown up to manhood. He stopped at the house of the Dock Commissioner, who is a great man there, and went one night to a ball there was on some occasion. The Commissioner's daughter was a very great lady that night, as the Duke accompanied her to the ball and danced with her. Whilst standing up in the dance, the Duke cast his eyes on a very pretty woman, and spoke of her with great interest to his partner, and inquired of her who that pretty woman was. The Commissioner's daughter didn't relish this, and, tossing up her head in some contempt, she said, 'Oh! she is only a grocer's wife, I believe.' This made no difference in the Duke's admiration, who kept looking in the same direction as before, to the great annoyance and surprise of his fair partner, who thought he demeaned himself by transferring his attention from herself to this 'low' person. Now if she had considered for a moment, she would have seen that to a person of the Duke's exalted rank there was very little

difference between herself and the grocer's wife. They only could appear in his eyes like two different shades of brown paper, after all. I'm afraid 'tis the same with painters in this country ; they are only considered as different shades of brown paper, so they needn't quarrel about their rank."

"But," interrupted Ward, "Sir Godfrey Kneller called himself one of God Almighty's nobles!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Northcote, "but that was as a genius, not merely as a painter. A genius is certainly above all rank ; but then who is to claim it? The title of *genius* cannot even be conferred by the greatest sovereign on earth, but only by the world at large ; a man's contemporaries cannot decide it, for posterity must have a say in it. There is a great deal of conceit among painters, and I have observed that those who show the least feeling in their works are generally the most conceited. Ah, happy West!—he, for instance, was so entrenched in his own conceit that nothing could touch him ; his port-holes were all shut. He used to say, 'When my pictures come into the Exhibition, every other painter takes his place as if a sovereign had come in.' Now Pompeo Battoni and Raphael Mengs were two men of the same class, and I believe Carlo Maratti was just the same. West used to tell how he was introduced to Battoni when he went to Rome, and of the vast consequence the latter assumed. 'Come here,

young man!' said Battoni to West, 'there—stand just there!' He then dipped his pencil in the colour and laid on the canvas a single touch, saying, 'Go! young man; now you have it in your power to say that you have seen Battoni paint!' And Fuseli used to tell how, in complimenting Battoni, he was waggish enough one day to say to him, 'You, Signor, far exceed Raphael, Correggio, or Titian, for you unite in yourself all their separate excellencies!' Battoni answered Fuseli with, 'But they had *their* merit!—yes, yes, they had their merit, too!' Mengs also affected the great man; to be sure, the court that was paid him, even by crowned heads, might in some measure excuse it. It is usual, in Passion Week, for the tapestries from Raphael's cartoons, together with many others, to be exposed to view under the circular piazza in front of St. Peter's. Sometimes a cardinal would come to look at them, his retinue keeping behind him, and moving as he moved; if he made a step, so did they, and when he stopped, they stopped, always carefully keeping the same distance. Now I remember once seeing Mengs come along with a whole train of his pupils to see these tapestries; he marched on before, with a ridiculously pompous air, and they walked behind him just as the cardinal's attendants did."

"Such a thing as that," observed Ward, "could not occur in our country!"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Northcote. "Painters here are in a peculiar situation; the position of a painter is not much thought of in England. We are only classed, in the public estimation, with singers and players; one great reason of this is that we are so exclusively employed in portrait-painting—we take all comers. A lady on coming to me the other day to have her portrait painted, said, 'Am I to sit down on this chair? Why, 'tis like going to have a tooth drawn!' What I am now saying, Sir Joshua also felt strongly, and it kept him humble; his sister also felt the same in a very strong degree; for instance, she always claimed more respectability from being the daughter of a poor clergyman than from being the sister of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the greatest painter England ever produced. How different it was in Italy when Leo X. had it in contemplation to make Raphael a cardinal! There was an honour! It would have raised Raphael to the highest rank, for a cardinal in Rome was considered the equal of a king."

"Stewardson, the artist," said Ward, "told me one day that a merchant had consulted him about the advisability of making his nephew a portrait-painter, but the merchant had scruples about it, thinking the employment not sufficiently respectable."

"Why, no more it is!" returned Northcote, "except attended with a high degree of success.

Success gives dignity to many other employments besides that of portrait-painting. What is a merchant without success and wealth? There is surely no inherent dignity in trade. What would Hamlet, the tradesman, whose house we saw the other day, be without his wealth, his splendid furniture, his servants, etc.? A really great man, however, is above all this; he is superior to his situation in life, be it what it may. And this was the case with Sir Joshua; he had all this splendour, which made the world think highly of him, and he was far above it, for it was of no value in his own eyes; it was an encumbrance necessary to make the world think highly of him, but which he himself despised."

The two painters now conversed about William Owen,<sup>1</sup> the portrait-painter, who was lying on a bed of sickness, and had been incapable for some time past of discharging the duties of his profession. This was an unfortunate circumstance for Owen, as he had purchased, shortly before the commencement of his illness, an expensive house in Bruton Street, it being his wish to reside in the midst of the fashionable world.

"Why, Knighton tells me," said Northcote, "that

<sup>1</sup> William Owen, R.A. (1769-1825), was confined for several years to his room with an affection of the spine. His sufferings were suddenly brought to an end one day in 1825, for he took an overdose of laudanum, which had been supplied through the careless mistake of a chemist's assistant.

poor Owen has been obliged to expend all he had, since he became ill, and is now feeling want, and has written to the King to help him on account of a large portrait he had commenced of his Majesty, which was to be sent to Ireland. The King, it seems, ordered two hundred pounds to be sent to Owen immediately out of the privy purse. Knighton bragged of this, and exclaimed, 'That's the way we do business!' He further told me that Owen's letter to the King arrived at the Palace after dark, and that the money was lying on Owen's breakfast-table the next morning. But poor Owen! I am sorry for him. He has done wrong in laying out his money in that great house. How could he tell that he would retain his connection, even if he had kept his health? How did he know but that some new genius might spring up and run away with the world from him? It was the case with Sir Joshua, for even Romney ran away with the world in a great measure from him; to be sure, he was able to bring them back again in some degree by the beautiful things he did, but still he never after had the run he had at first. But Sir Joshua acted like a prudent man, for whilst the run lasted he feathered his nest, and then didn't care; it also allowed him time for those beautiful fancy pictures, which have so charmed the world ever since.

"I'm always afraid that our friend Jackson, too,

is not saving his money, but depending too much on things going on for ever as they do at present. He ought to recollect that his patrons will die off, and be succeeded by those who will take little or no interest in him. Besides, some novelty may spring up—something that the world calls a genius, whom they will all run after, in which case he will be astonished to find how soon he will be deserted. Indeed, I wonder we have nothing of this sort at present; I never knew the world without one so long before. Besides, he can't paint the ladies well, so that he has but a slender hold, as every portrait-painter must have who cannot paint the ladies. 'Tis the ladies that bring grist to the mill, for if *they* are pleased, they soon influence the gentlemen; indeed, they are the great movers in things of this sort."

Northcote and Ward were speaking of the envy of the world, when the former alluded especially to the envy of persons in high life towards those who are able, by reason of their riches, to vie with them in splendour.

"There was a lady," said he, "from Liverpool—the wife of a rich merchant there—who used to come up to London every season for about a month, and her husband allowed her five thousand pounds to spend during that time. In consequence of this, she gave such splendid routs as to eclipse those of the nobility, who were excited to such a pitch,

through jealousy and spite, that they actually trod the fat part of the ham from the sandwiches upon the splendid carpets, and they even put it between the leaves of books in the library! There was another lady—the wife of a rich Indian nabob—who possessed an immense quantity of splendid china, and she roused the envy and jealousy of her company to such a degree that they threw it down and broke a quantity of it. Now this conduct must have been gratifying to the owner's vanity, at least it would have been to mine, for, as Dr. Johnson once well observed, 'a man's prosperity is nothing except it be known, and very little unless it be envied.'"

## CHAPTER XI

James Ward's warning to would-be artists—Northcote on the progress of art—On indiscriminate charity—Painters must obtain patronage—On historical painting—Artists must unceasingly study the beautiful—On painting the ladies—Portraits are but inadequate substitutes for absent friends—A nobleman's visit—Northcote and the period of Edward IV.

JAMES WARD, receiving one day a letter from a friend in Carlisle, which requested an expression of opinion relative to the formation of an Academy of Painting in that city, responded with a letter sounding the note of warning against the danger of tempting young men to become artists.

“What is the object of your Carlisle Institution?” wrote Ward to his friend. “Is it to disseminate a better taste among the inhabitants of your town? If so, it appears to me to be a praiseworthy object, or, at any rate, an innocent one. Or is it to encourage young men to become artists? If so, be most careful of what you do in this respect, as you undertake a very grave responsibility. Fuseli, who is old and experienced in such matters, says that instead of encouraging young men to become painters, every obstacle should be thrown in their way, as none but those who have strength and resolution to surmount them can possibly succeed; the rest may become successful tailors and shoe-

makers, and thus be saved from ruin before it is too late. I read lately some paragraphs on this subject in one of your newspapers—the *Carlisle Patriot*—which I must confess gave me some pain, as they appeared not only to be injudicious, but fraught with danger to many an inexperienced and too-ambitious youth. To blazon the puny exploits of boys in the public prints in language only fitted for those who have sat their century at least in the Temple of Fame is, indeed, as Shakespeare says, ‘to suckle fools, and chronicle small beer.’ I am quite certain that the only way to encourage art is to give employment to those who are qualified to undertake it, and not to turn the heads of a parcel of inexperienced boys. I speak warmly, perhaps, but it is thirteen years ago since I first came to London, and I do not speak without knowledge. I have myself suffered much anxiety and many privations during this time. I pray that you and your colleagues will act with much caution, and that you will be careful not to encourage any young men to become artists, without feeling well satisfied that Apollo has given his consent to the measure.”

Calling subsequently upon Northcote, Ward made him acquainted with the advice that he had proffered to his Carlisle friend.

“I quite approve,” observed Northcote, “of what you have written; indeed, the sentiments are so

like my own, that I could almost fancy I had written the letter myself. There is another view of the subject, however, which may be brought against your own. To engage numbers of candidates is the only way to advance art. To be sure, individuals must suffer, which is the case with every great undertaking; when an army, for instance, takes a town by storm, great numbers must fall; and in establishing or reforming a religion, many must become martyrs; this, indeed, is Nature's way in accomplishing her great purposes. Is it right to cultivate art? It is right to polish society, and it is unquestionably right to cultivate the arts as one of the means. Now all these country institutions will advance the art itself—at what expense I know not. Individual artists must scramble for themselves. It is surprising how the art has forced itself into every department of society—'tis like filling veins with a syringe in anatomical preparations. Our books are now filled with the finest prints, whereas I can well remember when there was scarcely a print to be seen in any book, and those prints, indeed, were of the roughest description, little better than what you now see at the top of halfpenny ballads. Our buildings now are decorated with every kind of architectural embellishment, nay, the very earthenware we eat and drink out of shows the progress of art, for our common pitchers are copied from the

finest Etruscan vases, or from those found in the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Lord! what clumsy things they used to be, I remember well! I believe the art will even force its way into our churches. Now all this gives employment to a great number of inferior artists, so that if a man cannot succeed in the higher departments, he may still preserve himself from starving—if he have industry—by applying himself to some of the inferior walks. No! there must be numbers to attempt, if we expect even *one* to succeed! This, of course, is the wider view of the case, and is right, I think, when applied to society at large; what you yourself have said is no doubt very proper when the welfare of the individual is consulted."

"Many become painters," said Northcote, later, "without any love for the art, or a single qualification for it, merely to escape the shoemaker's stall, or other servile employment, and be what they call 'gentlemen'; they not only do this, but plunge themselves into all the cares and expenses of a family, and then claim support from some Artists' Fund, on account of their connection with art! Now it is necessary for the good of the world that such folly and impudence as this is should be punished as a warning to others. Only the other evening I received an invitation to the Artists' Fund dinner. Were I as rich as Coutts, the banker, I would give nothing to such charities, for I am

decidedly of opinion that they are mischievous in their tendency; they hold out encouragement to impudence and presumption. I might appear to speak harshly—and my observations are certainly not meant to apply to those who are willing to make every sacrifice for the art—but I have seen letters of application for charity to the Royal Academy that have put me out of all patience; one person had even the impudence to ask charity because it was not convenient, at that time, to sell out of the funds. Besides, I prefer selecting my objects of charity myself, when I have anything to give, as no person in private life requires an almoner.

“To be successful in England, a painter must be a man-of-all-work; he must not stand out upon punctilio; he must be industrious in no ordinary degree, and be able to gratify that self-love which induces people to sit for their portraits. Merit in art is not the only ground of success; much is done by management as well, and of this quality there are various kinds that have been practised by different painters. Kneller’s was bravado; take, for instance, his little speech to Queen Anne, ‘Many painters have given your Majesty the crown and cushion, but it remained for me to make you a Queen!’ Romney’s was the opposite to Kneller’s plan; he was all humility and subserviency to a few men, such as Hayley, Cumber-

land, and a few others ; he threw himself, as it were, upon them, and they procured him sitters. Then Sir Joshua, though deeply politic, wished to appear with an innocent, childlike simplicity, and was even thought by many to be hardly fit to take care of himself, but they little knew him ! And Jackson's gentle, passive manner will help him much, and bring him many friends ; indeed, to succeed in art, a man must avoid all appearance of keenness, and especially of wit. It is very necessary for every painter to get connections by every possible means, as no one, not even the finest painter in the world, can ever succeed without them. Sir Joshua Reynolds was well aware of this fact, and acted accordingly, though with great discretion, as he did in everything else. During the London season he rarely dined at home. There were only Miss Reynolds, Miss Palmer, and myself at dinner day after day, and though the frequent dining-out probably shortened his life, it was of great advantage to him in his profession. Why, Titian—even Titian ! — was helped by connection, and Rubens, too, in a great degree."

"I should prefer," interrupted Ward, "a smaller amount of employment, with quiet and retirement!"

"You cannot have it!" retorted Northcote, sharply ; "you must either have a great deal or none at all : the world runs to the fashionable painter, not to suit his convenience, but to please

itself; you must get employment when you can, and feather your nest, as Sir Joshua did, and then you need not be so anxious about it, but paint to please yourself and gain a solid reputation. Patronage is of the greatest consequence to a painter's success, to some it is everything—what would Lonsdale and Jackson have been without it? For my own part I never could have borne patronage, for I never could have given up my liberty, and have submitted to be dictated to: no one, in consequence, ever cared about my success, no one ever cared a farthing whether I was on the throne or a gibbet. I had all to myself, but, still, I would not recommend my example to others. It has often struck me that a good way to gain patronage is to borrow money of some rich man, as by that means you get him into a sort of partnership with you, and he will take pains to secure you sitters for his own sake. I have had money offered me, but I was a fool, and would not accept it; I have a notion that I should act differently if I had to begin the world again."

"No!" exclaimed Ward; "I believe you would do no such thing, for your spirit would never allow you to do what you have just been recommending."

"Ah, you think not?" returned Northcote, after a pause; "why, perhaps you are right—but I should have acted more wisely if I had done it."

The two friends next spoke of the boldness of

several of their younger contemporaries, who considered that they were introducing the 'grand style' into England, because they attempted large historical pictures.

"The 'grand style' indeed!" exclaimed Northcote; "why, it doesn't depend on size; a picture the size of one's hand may have all the qualities of the 'grand style,' and another the size of this room may totally lack them. It's such impudence to affect to be the introducers of high historic art into this country! Now, what has West been doing all his life? He has been engaged in historic art, and, in some respects, with considerable success; to be sure, he collected his materials too much from pictures, instead of seizing on the essences of nature, but he certainly made up his nest with great ability. His composition was as good as any man's, and he always told his tale distinctly and with great decorum; it was in beauty, expression and colouring that he failed. West's pictures, compared with Raphael's, are, in my opinion, what Addison's and Otway's plays are to those of Shakespeare. The former show great skill and ability, but still are evidently artificial, whereas you cannot read a page in Shakespeare without being surprised at some trait of character, which he evidently could not have got at, except through his instinctive observation of nature. These pretenders to historic art affect to despise portrait-painting as something quite beneath

them. Now, this is ridiculous, for before they pretend to despise it, they should at least convince the world that it is not because they themselves are not able to do it! No, no; portrait-painting isn't a thing to be despised, and it is plainly out of the reach of these boasting pretenders to high art. I think a passage in Scripture, when parodied, might be applied to them: 'If you cannot paint your brother, whom you have seen, how can you paint the Saviour, whom you have not seen?' These men despise portrait-painting—and yet Titian and Raphael were not above it, for the portraits of both of them were among the finest of their works." . . .

"In my portraits," remarked Ward, "I sometimes have a difficulty in getting the forms correct, and I find it easier to manage in chalk."

"You must not encumber yourself with colours," observed Northcote, "but lay them in two—black and white—as Sir Joshua did, and always recommended. And I advise you to accustom yourself to beauty as much as possible, and to look as little as possible at anything else: practise incessantly from beautiful heads, both from the antique and from nature, so as to paint them rapidly and easily; some of the Niobe heads are particularly suitable. Now, my father, who was a very sensible man, but knew nothing of art, used to remark that if he were a painter he would accustom himself to draw the

most beautiful heads, and when his sitters came he would observe where they deviated from these, and thus he would at once perceive wherein the likeness consisted. My father's idea was a very good one. Hoppner frequently remarked that in painting ladies' portraits he used to make as beautiful a face as he could, then give it a likeness to the sitter, working down from this beautiful state until the bystanders should cry out, 'Oh! I see a likeness coming!' whereupon he then stopped, and never ventured to make it more like."

"A barrister's wife," said Ward, "recently sat to an artist you know well, but she is very dissatisfied with the picture; she never mentions the painter now, without using the expression 'that beast,' or 'that monster.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Northcote, "to paint a lady's portrait is indeed a hazardous undertaking; you are sure to make either a friend or an enemy for life; beauty of one kind or another must be given to it. Now Kneller gave it at the expense of likeness, and his pictures are not now so highly esteemed, for they have too little nature in them. Whatever may be thought of Kneller's pictures now, however, it must be remembered that his success was unequalled, and he frequently received twelve sitters in a single day. Away in China, painters are described by a term that signifies 'beauty-makers.' This circumstance ought to be kept in mind by

every artist, for to be able to represent beauty is the only way to succeed as a portrait-painter. Gardner,<sup>1</sup> the crayon-painter, used to advise me to fill my rooms with portraits of beautiful women ; it did not matter who the women were if they were only beautiful. When the ladies are pleased, success, indeed, soon follows."

"A portrait-painter," remarked Ward, "well known to us both, does not act in that way, and most of his portraits seem those of homely people."

"Oh, codgers, I suppose!" resumed Northcote ; "now it may be necessary to paint codgers, but they ought to be kept out of sight. Sir Joshua, of course, painted codgers, but he managed to make them agreeable some way or other."

"If one could procure handsome sitters," said Ward, "it might be practicable to paint beautiful portraits."

"You must do it," replied Northcote, "from ordinary sitters. High beauty can never be painted satisfactorily either to the possessors of it or to others. Now this circumstance of being able to paint beauty was unquestionably the making of Kneller. To be sure, his women are too much alike, owing to his habit of generalising so much ; but I think he has escaped that fault in his portraits of men, for the full-bottomed wig in which they were all dressed makes them appear to us to resemble each other more than they really do.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Gardner (1750-1805), exhibited some of his work at the Academy at the age of twenty-one. He was at one time fashionable for his small portraits, both in oils and crayons, and received the assistance and praise of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Though beauty, however, is so highly requisite in a female portrait, yet a considerable degree of likeness and individuality is required as well, for portraits are generally painted for friends and relations as affectionate remembrances of those who were near and dear to them. It becomes necessary, therefore, to combine the two qualities by being able to seize upon the interesting part of the character, that which their friends will most delight to see in it. Lely, of course, was the man for grace; his portraits are the most graceful that have ever been produced, more so than even those of Titian, Guido, Parmigiano, or any of them;—they are like beautiful dreams. The works of no portrait-painter of the present time are fine—they are not ladies and gentlemen, and are deficient in character. You sometimes praise Jackson's portraits, but they are only the representation of mere still life, you know; there is no struggle after the higher requisites. Now, when a man only attempts still life, he has no excuse for failure, if he does not execute it well. Sir Joshua Reynolds gave himself infinite trouble in seeking after grace, character, and momentary expression. I remember how he used to twist his figures about, sometimes turning them one way, and then another, and then perhaps back again; he never thought of saving himself trouble, and mere still life had no value in his eyes."

Northcote now showed his friend a half-length

portrait of a lady and child which he had recently painted, and observed that the friends of the lady in question—especially her mother—had not at first been satisfied with it, but had subsequently become delighted with it.

“The fact is,” continued the painter, “though the mother herself might not be aware of it, she wanted a real substitute for her daughter, who has married away and left her. Now this is what a portrait-painter cannot give; it is unreasonable to expect it. To be sure, a portrait is a better memento of an absent friend than a lock of hair—yet it is an inadequate substitute!”

“I had rather have,” interrupted Northcote’s sister, who was listening to the conversation, “a lock of hair as a memento than a bad portrait!”

“Why, bad painters,” instantly returned her brother, “are able only to give the worst part of their sitters—their faults—and these they generally exaggerate; such works are indeed hateful things. Now Sir Joshua was so far removed from this fault that he actually used to be complimented by lovers; they used to tell him that after seeing his portraits of their ladies, they thought the originals handsomer than before! The reason of this was, Sir Joshua seized upon some particular quality that he liked and made it more palpable than it was in nature, and which afterwards served as an index to point it out to them. But, after all, I think it is

*memory* that gives us the best substitute for an absent or deceased friend!"

"Memory," said Ward, "may do this for you, who from your habits must be able to remember faces more accurately than the world in general, but it does not seem to be the case commonly!"

"Why, it may be so," returned Northcote; "yet I can't help thinking that a portrait, though it may do very well to recall to memory a person but little known or cared for, cannot go further. However, if people think otherwise, and wish to have the portraits of their dearest friends—as we find they do—it is not for you and me to oppose them!"

During their conversation, Northcote was engaged on the portrait of a certain earl, and Ward now stood before the painter arrayed in the nobleman's robes. The earl himself was suddenly shown into the room, and was somewhat amused upon finding Ward attired in his robes. His call was a brief one, however, and after his departure Ward remarked that he had a very kind expression of countenance.

"Oh, he is a very good - natured man!" exclaimed Northcote, "and I was much pleased with him when he sat to me. Now, you consider that the robe which you are wearing seems old and tarnished, but an old and tarnished look is a great beauty with these people; new ones they would consider vulgar, as denoting new-made nobility.

Yet he does not seem to care so much about such things, as some noblemen I have seen; his family have been ennobled too long a time for that; I believe it is almost as old as any we have.<sup>1</sup> Now the Scotch are far before us in this respect, for all our old nobility were exterminated in the Civil Wars between the Houses of York and Lancaster; first one part, and then the other, gained the upper hand, and the adherents of both were ultimately destroyed, till scarcely any were left."

Northcote had painted many pictures illustrative of those gloomy times, and was uncommonly well acquainted with that period of English history. Ward records that it was his venerable friend's custom to speak of that period in a manner so vivid, and with such an air of reality, that any person listening to his eloquence, and not knowing the time which had elapsed since those far-off days, would have imagined that Northcote must have been an eye-witness of the great scenes which he described.

"The tragic events of those sad times," observed Northcote, "afford fine subjects for the painter and the poet; the gloomy dungeons, and the armour, and the caparisoned horses, produce the finest picturesque effects. I myself, at any rate, have drawn largely from that period, for there is one family—that of Edward IV.—which I may almost say I have got half my livelihood by."

<sup>1</sup> The Tufton family, of Kent.

## CHAPTER XII

Northcote on the conversation of Johnson, Goldsmith, and Burke—Speaks concerning Opie and Hoppner—“Opie ought never to have married”—On Thomas Foster’s sad end—“The delusion of friendship”—In praise of stratagem—“The public a great baby with immense fists”—A painter should never desert a run of employment—On Opie again—On the method of proceeding with a portrait feature by feature—Northcote relates an amusing anecdote—Sir Godfrey Kneller—On whole-length portraits—The ambition must be to paint the ladies well—On difficult subjects for portraits—Opie again—The wealthy Duchess of St. Albans.

“UPON first coming to London,” said Ward to Northcote, “were you not greatly surprised, as an inmate at Sir Joshua Reynolds’, to find yourself in company with such men as Johnson, and Goldsmith, and Burke? Were you not surprised at the superiority of their conversations?”

“That was not the case,” responded Northcote, “for I had been accustomed to hear conversations at Plymouth between my father and some persons who were in the habit of visiting him, that I certainly did not feel surprised in the way you suppose, when I came into the company of those men. I cannot help thinking there was something of a very high kind in the conversations I had been accustomed to hear at Plymouth—extremely sensible—and yet those Plymouth men had no idea themselves that they were at all extraordinary, which

made the conversation of a still higher and finer quality ; besides, there was more of wit, and wit of a natural, piquant kind. Johnson, and all that set, had parts to sustain ; they were conscious that they were expected to talk well, which is a thing that always destroys that simplicity which is the great charm of conversation. Now, there were some persons who were in the habit of coming to my father's, who used to say such sensible things, that I cannot say I was at all surprised when I came to hear the others. To be sure, my expectations had, of course, been highly raised ; it was a thing called up as perfect. This reminds me of the anecdote about Correggio, who had heard Raphael so cried up, that he did not know what to expect. It might have been something—for aught he knew—that would have annihilated himself as a painter, but when he came to see what it really was, he exclaimed, '*I* also am a painter !' And so, in this sense, I also said, '*I*, too, have heard conversations !'

John Cawse,<sup>1</sup> who was present, and who had been a pupil of Opie, now spoke in praise of the genius of his former master.

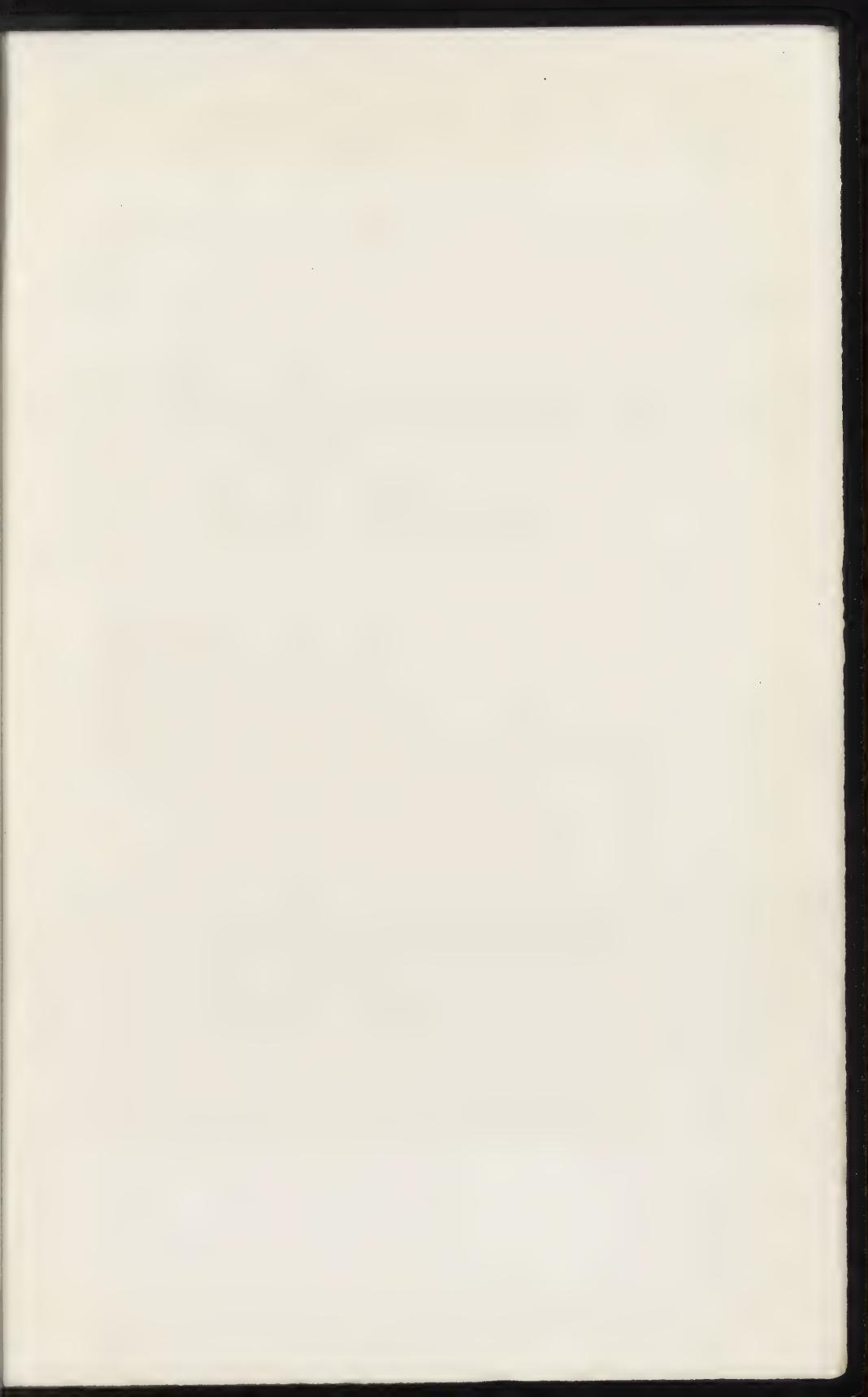
"Why, to be sure," said Northcote, "Opie was a very great man—the greatest man who ever came

<sup>1</sup> John Cawse (1779-1862), exhibited portraits and subject pictures at the Academy and elsewhere, and was the author of a work published in 1840 under the title of "The Art of Painting Portraits, Landscapes, etc., in oil-colours."

under my observation—but I do not say that he was the greatest painter for all that. No! he wanted the graces and every idea of beauty, things so much sought after by the world, and so properly sought after. Painting is in this respect an unsuccessful struggle; Opie ought to have been something else. For originality of mind, he was certainly the greatest man I ever saw. There was Hoppner, too; he ought to have been a lawyer, he would have made an excellent one."

"But he was successful as a painter, don't you think?" asked Cawse.

"Why, to be sure he was, especially as a portrait-painter; he was a finer portrait-painter than any now living. A man of talents will rise to respectability in any line; but still he would have gained the object of his ambition much more as a lawyer. The profession of the law is arduous enough, but still it is much easier than painting; painting I look upon as impossible, for whatever its merits or demerits might be, it is certainly beyond humanity, and no one can attain to all its requisites. No, no; the finest works of art are but feeble attempts to imitate nature! There are many men, doubtless, who do very well, comparatively speaking; but, still, the art has never been conquered, it has never even been approached. What are the finest things that have ever been done, but mere trifling and nonsense? What are even Raphael's works? Could you ask





JOHN OPIE, R.A.

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Raphael what he thought of his own attempts, he would tell you what I have done. Could you ask Shakespeare what he thought of his own plays, he would call them all trumpery nonsense.

“We were talking of Opie; Opie ought never to have married, for he was no more fit to be married than a log of wood. He ought to have known this, as Sir Joshua did. Sir Joshua knew very well that it would not do for him, devoted as he was to his art, to marry; he worshipped another divinity, and no man can worship two—one is enough for any man. He had already sold himself; and yet if it had not been for this, he had many fine domestic qualities in his nature, as his pictures show. Now Opie was a greatly ambitious man; he wanted to triumph and domineer over every other painter; he had none of the softness fit for married life. Now, had I had a daughter, I would as soon have married her to an American savage. His first wife ran off with another man, whom she afterwards married, making him an excellent wife; I have heard they lived happily together. She was of a mild and feeling disposition; she required affectionate attentions, and was not fit for Opie, or rather he was not fit for her. I remember the day on which she left him, for Opie and I had appointed the evening of that day for a walk together. When the appointed time came, I called upon him, and he came downstairs

to me, I recollect, with a very serious face, and said, 'By God! a sad misfortune has happened to me!' 'A misfortune!' said I; 'I am sorry for it, what is it?' 'Why, my wife has run off!' he said. 'Oh,' said I, 'that is nothing more than what I have long expected!' and then we took our stroll. Bonaparte was another man who should never have married; he was too much taken up with his ambition to pay proper attention to a wife. No! a man cannot worship two idols! Had Raphael been a married man, we should probably have heard little of him. Many painters do marry, of course, and do very well; they manage somehow to divide their attention between their art and their domestic feelings, but then they are not devoted to their pursuit like Opie and Sir Joshua were. Observe, I am not recommending any particular course; I look with infinite respect upon a man who brings up a family; he is generally a much more amiable and a better character than the other, who is little more than a limb of the Devil, after all. All I mean to say is, that a man so devoted to his pursuit as those I have mentioned to you, is in fact wedded already; I am speaking of those few who possess an impetus that nothing can control, and which the world calls 'genius.'"

The conversation now turned on Thomas Foster, a young painter with whom Northcote and Ward were well acquainted, and who was becoming some-

what notorious among his friends for his love of pleasure, excessive indulgence in strong drink, and the keeping of late hours. Northcote observed that few persons were really adapted for the life of a painter, the privations which must be undergone for it being innumerable, and not many people could endure them. He further observed that an artist was only really repaid for all his pains by the quiet delights he enjoyed in his painting-room ; the constant pursuit after excellence ; the contemplation of exquisite beauty of every kind ; and the ardour of continually attempting to outstrip himself.

It was but a few days subsequent to their conversation about young Foster, when Ward called upon Northcote one morning and communicated to him that the poor fellow was no more. He had died by his own hand.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Northcote, “ then his wit and entertaining qualities have been his ruin, by drawing him off from his studies into idle company. To dissipate the energies of the human mind in wit and fun is like a man’s throwing away his property among the mob in halfpence. Sir Joshua used to say that when a painter felt himself inclined to be a talker, he should sew up his mouth, or he would unquestionably go to nothing.”

“ Foster,” said Ward, “ fancied himself deserted, I believe, by those whom he had looked upon as his friends.”

"Now there is a word," continued Northcote, "that ought to be put out of the English language, as it conveys a false meaning, and that is *friendship*, for no such thing exists! Every man has a difficult part to perform in taking care of himself, so what is called friendship can only be a barter or exchange of services; a man cannot afford more, and more ought not to be expected. The delusion of friendship has certainly been the destruction of many of the finest characters, for indeed none else are in danger from it. It has been so in the present instance, for poor Foster was of a fine, open, generous disposition; he suspected nothing else in other people, and he has been deceived. What a pity it is! I think I could have saved him, had I known his situation. I would have told him, 'A young man of your handsome person, and witty and lively disposition, is not calculated to be shut up in a garret as an artist, where those qualities must be entirely sacrificed; indeed, it will scarcely be possible for you to make such a sacrifice, and if you don't, you cannot expect to succeed: the consequence of this will be, that those you looked upon as your patrons and friends will fly off, and even become your enemies, when they find you are not likely to do them credit.' No; I would have advised him to have employed the interest of some of these great friends in procuring him to be sent out in the train of some of our ambassadors abroad, or some such

situation as that, where his fine person, his wit, and his good nature, might have rendered him the ornament and delight of the society he was thrown amongst; he might then have made his fortune by marriage and been a happy man, whereas now he has fallen a victim to the sad mistake of fancying that he was to become a painter—a secluded, patient being, totally engrossed in his own pursuit, and as totally regardless of the world around him, as the world was regardless of him. He was as far from all this as light is from darkness. No! if I had been a beauty, I would never have been a painter. But what a pity it was that no one opened his eyes in time, otherwise he might have been saved. Oh, how melancholy that the finest dispositions should thus be sacrificed, while such as — remain!"

"The person you have just mentioned," said Ward, "might perhaps be driven to the same act; I understand he is in great distress."

"*He* driven to the same act!" exclaimed Northcote; "were *he* to blow his brains out, he would regain my good opinion. But he is safe enough, and you will never hear of his acting in the manner you fear."

Ward now related an anecdote of a portrait-painter of obscure origin, who was accustomed to exhibit diamond buckles, and other valuable trinkets, to his sitters, passing them off as heirlooms, and saying that it would not have been necessary for him to be painting there, but for a rascally uncle of his who

had got rid of the 'family estate.' Northcote was shocked at such meanness as this, but observed that the man in question evidently knew the world.

"It's a mortifying thing," said he, "to reflect that real merit is of too delicate a texture to be observed and appreciated by the generality of the world, unless pushed on by powerful patronage; at least it is a long time in becoming generally known. Something obvious and palpable, like fine clothes, becomes necessary, to arrest the attention of the public. Sir Joshua knew this: when he was coming out as a painter, he set up a splendid carriage, with decorated panels, like those made use of by the sheriffs of London. He used to send his sister to ride about in it, for he had no time to ride in it himself. Miss Reynolds was of a very modest and retiring disposition, and used to be exceedingly annoyed at this, for when she stopped at a shop a crowd would collect to stare at the carriage, and ask whose it was. Now this was just what Sir Joshua wanted! He also fitted up a splendid painting-room of an octagonal shape and beautifully decorated, and this very room, when he became celebrated, he suffered to remain tarnished and blackened with London smoke, and cared nothing about it. It is the same in all professions. I have often been hurt to see, at the theatres, men of real talent in acting eclipsed by fellows who ranted themselves black in the face."

“Another part of the policy of the painter I have mentioned,” said Ward, “was never to appear in difficulties, or disheartened, before his sitters.”

“Why, this is politic,” said Northcote, “though a man of far superior talents to him may afford to exclaim ‘How difficult this is!’ However, his is the safe way. The world is extremely capricious, and soon tired of anything, however excellent it may be; it is very difficult for a man to fight his way through it; in short, the public is a great baby with immense fists, and unless you are very dexterous, it will hit you hard blows.”

“Whenever or wherever,” said Northcote, a little later, “a painter has a run of employment, he should remain with it and make the best of it; the money he will get by so doing will enable him to procure proper conveniences. He must not think that he can leave the run of employment and return to it when he may please to do so; he will probably find that it will not come to him a second time. I found the truth of this to my cost, for after leaving Sir Joshua, I went down to Plymouth and Portsmouth, where I had a great run of sitters, and these connections I left, contrary to the advice of Sir Joshua, and went to Italy. When I returned, I was much improved, and went down to those places again, for I had spent whilst abroad the money that I had made there before, and found I could not all at once procure employment in

London. I thought I had nothing to do but to go on as I had done before, nay, even better than before, for having seen the pictures in Italy, I thought they would think still more highly of me; but I found myself mistaken, for they looked shy at me, fancying that I had been unsuccessful in London and was therefore obliged to come among them again. Now, this was discouraging, for I had spent my savings—four hundred pounds—abroad, and the money would have been very useful to me on commencing practice in London. I do not think I should act in the same way, if I were to pass my life again. To be sure the time was very unfavourable, for Opie was making the greatest noise, and Wolcot ('Peter Pindar') was puffing him off as a prodigy, as an inspired genius found in a tin-mine in Cornwall. The great world flocked about him, so that the street where he lived was scarcely passable, indeed Opie himself used to laugh, and say that he should really be obliged to plant cannon at his door to keep them off. During this time, my knocker might have been made of glass! Opie was a dreadful hurt to me at that time!"

"How long were you in making the four hundred pounds you referred to just now?" asked Ward.

"Oh, in about a year. I painted quickly, generally taking a profile view, or one approaching it,

as I found I got a stronger likeness by this means, and did it in less time as well."

"I should like to have your opinion," said Ward, "of Stewardson's method of proceeding with his portraits feature by feature, finishing one before he goes to another, for he had strongly recommended it to me as a sure way of saving time, as well as of preventing the troublesome criticisms of the sitters' friends, who cannot pretend, he says, to offer their opinions of the likeness whilst it is without a nose or a mouth; by the time all the features are introduced the head is finished."

"I will allow," said Northcote, "that this method of proceeding might have many advantages, but with myself there is in portrait-painting one great requisite, which weighs more than all the rest, and without which it seems to have no value, and this is *character*. I also think that by Stewardson's method it will be difficult to obtain a body of colour, which is so desirable a quality, especially if the portrait be for placing among other pictures. It was the want of this which injured Lawrence, and even Vandyke's portraits seem to sink into the background alongside Titian's."

"How did Sir Joshua do?" asked Ward.

"In Sir Joshua's first sitting, the face was a beautiful cloud; everything was in its right place, certainly, but as soft as possible; indeed, they were often stronger likenesses in this state than ever

afterwards, and especially was this the case with one of Garrick, which, I remember, seemed to me the most perfect likeness possible, but it never came near this afterwards. In regard, however, to preventing the criticisms of the sitters' friends, or disgusting them by giving disagreeable impressions which a portrait just commenced is apt to do, Stewardson's plan might answer. To be sure, one has to go through a great deal in this respect; they fill the room with people when they come to sit, and it is such a bull-bait! It is really very difficult to work to any purpose under such circumstances. A painter, not the sitter and his friends, is the best judge of good work; surely he understands his own business best! This reminds me of a story told of Garrick and his prompter. When Garrick was making some pauses which he thought necessary to give the proper effect, his prompter kept going on, and Garrick called out to him impatiently, 'If you know better than I, how it ought to be done, come out here and do it yourself!' And so, if painters suffer their employers to dictate to them, their pictures will not be fit to hang up, but be laughing-stocks to every person of taste; and even those who have thus influenced them, when they find this to be the case, will be the first to rail at them, and lay all the blame on their shoulders. A painter must persist in doing what is right; his employer may be angry at him at first for so doing, but will soon

come over, when he finds that everyone praises the picture. Portrait-painting is a very difficult thing, for it depends so much upon what is wanted, whether an exact likeness, or something pleasing and ornamental. I remember once painting a gentleman, who had come to me saying that he had got portraits of his ancestors for five generations, and he supposed he must add his portrait to them. When he had sat to me a few times, he observed, as he was leaving my room, 'Now I suppose you have completed me, and I think very successfully?' I said, 'Oh, no; it is not done yet, it is not sufficiently like; I must do a good deal more to it.' 'No, by G—d!' he exclaimed, 'I am a devilish handsome fellow, and I will go down to posterity in this manner!' At the same time, he seized up the picture and set off with it; I followed to the door, entreating him to let me do more to it, but it was all in vain, for he ran into his carriage and drove quickly away. Now the portraits of Kneller must have been of this description—what the sitters wished them to be, when handed down to posterity. This is clear, as they could not have been like, for they are without any discrimination of character in the ladies, and with very little in the men. The ladies are all of the same age, the same beauty, the same gracefulness. I suppose, with all this, he gave a certain degree of likeness, but it could not have been much, as they are too much alike. But, then,

they are most beautiful things ; it is no wonder they pleased the sitters, as they put them in such good humour with themselves. I believe I should have gone to Sir Godfrey Kneller myself, notwithstanding my opinion of his deficiency in regard to truth of resemblance. I cannot help thinking that Kneller really possessed a greater capacity than any of the painters, even than Sir Joshua Reynolds. But he despised the world, and was determined to make its folly subservient to his magnificence and his expensive habits ; he lost the game as a great painter by it, though he won the game he played for. The great mass of his works are such hasty slobbers that they are scarcely fit to be seen, but what fine pictures he did when he had evidently thought it worth his while to do his best ! Lely and Kneller painted the portraits of Charles the Second at the same time ; this was for the sake of saving the King the trouble of sitting to each separately. Lely, being the older man and the established Court-painter, had his choice of attitude and so on, whilst Kneller was obliged to edge in as best he could. But, Lord ! Kneller had finished his portrait almost before Lely had done the outline of his ; he was indeed a great marvel, and could do anything. It is said that this circumstance caused Lely's death, but Lely was not such a fool as that. Kneller was a genius ; he had a high taste for beauty, and in gracefulness was superior to any

painter that ever lived, not excepting Raphael and Guido. His power of painting whole-lengths was certainly beyond that of Sir Joshua. Now I dislike whole-length portraits exceedingly ; I do assure you that I cannot describe the nausea I have of such productions ; I had rather be a chimney-sweeper than be confined to painting whole-lengths. It is very seldom you see a fine one, for I am convinced they come under the head of history-painting. Kneller's whole-lengths are fine ; his drapery shows the limbs, and we can see a figure under it. I cannot say the same of Sir Joshua's draperies ; they look too much as if there were nothing under, being thrown into masses to suit the effect only ; but he either could not, or would not, take the trouble to give a sufficient look of reality to them. He would throw a piece of muslin over the back of a chair, in order to see the character of it, but seldom troubled himself to do more. Now, draperies to appear real, can only be painted from the lay figure, as no living person can sit long enough to have them made out in detail.

“ Such was the high estimation in which Kneller was held as a painter, that Sir Joshua used to say that, in his youth, had any person attempted to compare Vandyke with him, he would have been laughed at as an idiot. Vandyke certainly had less genius, but he did a great deal more with what he had.

“Portrait-painters, to achieve success, must keep in mind that the great object of their ambition must be to paint the ladies; I am never tired of expressing this opinion. They must study ladies’ portraits morning, noon and night, and they must be able to make them look fashionable; it is this which favours Lawrence.”

“But the sitter,” said Ward, “might be the very reverse of all that; what must the painter do then?”

“It does not matter what your sitter is!” exclaimed Northcote; “you must give her the air of a lady. Sir Joshua’s subjects were sometimes such that he had very narrow escapes; for instance, the picture of Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth. The lady in that picture, if painted by some men I could name, would have been the landlady of the *Black Bear*; yet you can see, though fat and clumsy, she is still a lady. And it stands to reason, for a female may be very fat and shapeless, and yet have the air of a lady! Painters should also be very careful to avoid committing a fault that Sir Joshua had such a horror of, and that is, attempting to make a sitter smile. Now it cannot be done!—the whole face cannot be made to agree with it. You never saw it done by Vandyke, Lely or Velasquez!”

“I doubt that assertion!” interrupted Ward.

“Can you name to me,” returned Northcote, “one portrait by Vandyke that is taken smiling, or by

Titian either? No! I am quite certain you cannot! Why, the only attempt by Sir Joshua of this kind is the girl in the fortune-telling, and it is a decided failure, being a ghastly grin, instead of a laugh. Some persons, to be sure, have a look of good-nature almost approaching to a smile, as a lady by Sir Joshua, I remember, who had a most agreeable, familiar look. We sometimes speak of difficult subjects for portraits, but, after all, I think the difficulty or ease largely depends upon either the want or presence of a coincidence between the sitter's countenance and the painter's feelings. Some faces would be difficult to me which would be easy to another painter, because they either make no impression at all on my feelings, or make a disagreeable one; and, in either case, I should find it difficult to paint them. There are many persons of my acquaintance whom I highly respect, too, who would quite alarm me, if they asked me to paint their portraits, as I feel I should make little of them. And, on the contrary, I have painted persons who have come to me almost in despair, saying they had sat to several painters all to no purpose, and yet I have found them easy to paint. It is curious also in this respect, how much depends on the formation of our minds in regard to our liking or disliking the works of other painters. There are many painters of merit, whose works I cannot bear, and I take it for granted that mine

are also disagreeable to them; the reason of this is, that their faults run counter to my feelings. Painting is an art extremely interesting and delightful, but it is also extremely difficult in practice, and requires the nicest adaptation of the means to the end, in order to ensure success. The mind of the artist must be kept in constant training, like the body of a prize-fighter, a wrestler, or a runner. It is said of Romney that he refused his consent to his son's becoming a painter, and, when urged to give his reasons, replied, 'Because he must paint all day and study all night; otherwise he will be good for nothing!'"

Cawse now interrupted a remark which had the effect of turning the conversation once more on the subject of Opie.

"Opie," said Northcote, "was the greatest man I ever saw—and he was the greatest devil. Oh, how very interesting his conversation always was to me!"

"That is an odd compliment," interrupted Cawse, "to pay to a devil!"

"Why, I have often thought," continued Northcote, "I should like to spend a morning with the Devil, if I could do it without being singed; his conversation must be very amusing from his vast knowledge of the world. Opie was a painter and a mighty person, but after the world first left him, he never recovered his popularity; he was

deserted and he knew it. Sir Joshua was the only man I knew, who brought the world back to him after he had been comparatively deserted."

"But the world," said Ward, "did, in some degree, come back to Opie; he was a good deal employed in portrait-painting!"

"No, that was not the case," continued Northcote. "To be sure, he had a wife—his second wife—who left no stone unturned for him; she drove all before her into his painting-room; she had a woman's power and would take no denial; otherwise, his portraits were not liked. As Sir Joshua said, Opie was too severe upon his sitters. Portraits are wanted by relations and friends, who see with the eyes of affection; a portrait-painter must be able to accommodate himself to these feelings, or he will not succeed. I have had mean-looking persons come to me, but I knew that those who sent them looked upon them with very different eyes, and expected a very different representation."

"My daughters," said Cawse, after a pause, "have come out as public singers; the Duchess of St. Albans<sup>1</sup> takes notice of them, and is anxious that they shall go to her frequently. It was only the other night she took off a superb bonnet from

<sup>1</sup> The Duchess of St. Albans was in earlier years Harriet Mellon, an actress of some celebrity. Thomas Coutts, the wealthy banker, at the age of eighty, took the actress for his second wife; he died six years later, and his widow married the ninth Duke of St. Albans.

her own head and put it on the head of one of my daughters to play the part of 'Julia Mannering' in ; besides, she has made them presents of money many a time."

"I would advise you, by all means," said Northcote, "to keep in with that woman, as she wields a mighty instrument of power which even Royalty cannot pretend to ; her wealth gives her a power which German princes know nothing of, certainly. She loved the stage from early youth, and she may be of use to your daughters."

"I take them," said Cawse, "in a coach to the door when she has them to her evening parties, and I again go for them when it is time to come home ; I myself never go inside the house. She sometimes asks the girls, 'Why don't I see your father?—tell him I would be glad to see him.'"

"But did you know her formerly?" asked Northcote.

"Know her! I knew her as well as I knew anybody!"

"Oh," said Northcote, "then let me advise you to keep out of her sight; your daughters will manage her better without you, as they have never known her except as a great personage; besides, they are young, and there is a great charm in youth which the most capricious and haughty cannot but feel: she would soon quarrel with you, if you were to make your appearance!"

## CHAPTER XIII

Northcote watching his picture in the fading twilight : the advantage of this—He speaks concerning the industry of professional men—“There never was a picture in this world finished”—On the success of his own pictures—The four perfect pictures of the world—In praise of Raphael’s “Miracle of Bolsena”—Painters should always endeavour to paint from nature—John Jackson, R.A.—A word concerning constitutional virtues.

UPON going to Northcote’s at the close of a beautiful day, Ward found the venerable painter quietly sitting in the corner of his largest room. He was watching, by the fading twilight, the picture he then had in hand, which practice appears to have been with him a frequent one. He had retired into the darkest corner of the spacious apartment, and Ward, upon entering the room, could scarcely observe his friend till the sound of his voice proclaimed his whereabouts.

Ward remarked on the utility of this method of watching a picture, and suggested that it was calculated to point out what was faulty in the light and shade.

“To be sure,” responded Northcote, “it is useful in the highest degree, not only as regards light and shade, but form and colour as well. A painter must study his picture in every degree of light ; it is all little enough. You know, I suppose,

that this period of the day between daylight and darkness is called 'the painter's hour'? There is, however, this inconvenience attending it, which allowance must be made for—the reds look darker than by day, indeed almost black, and the light blues turn white, or nearly so. This low, fading light also suggests many useful hints as to arrangement, from the circumstance of the dashings of the brush in a picture but newly commenced suggesting forms that were not originally intended, but which often prove much finer ones. Ah, sometimes I see something very beautiful in these forms, but, then, I have such coaxing to do to get it fixed!—for, when I draw near the canvas, the vision is gone, and I have to go back and creep up to it again and again, and, at last, to hold my brush at the utmost length of my arm before I can fix it, so that I can avail myself of it the next day. The way to paint a really fine picture is first to paint it in the mind, to imagine it as strongly and distinctly as possible, and then to sketch it, while the impression is strong and vivid. I have frequently shut myself up in a dark room for hours, or even days, when I have been endeavouring to imagine a scene I was about to paint, and have never stirred till I had got it clear in my mind; then I have sketched it as quickly as I could, before the impression has left me. The public little know, when they see an exhibition of pro-

fessional skill, what infinite labour it has cost to obtain it. Opie used to say to me, 'If you and I had been merchants, and we had applied the same industry and application in that capacity that we have done as painters, what rich men we should have become!' The industry of common labourers cannot be compared with that of painters. Good God! how little they appear to do when I am compelled to have them here, or when I see them putting up pictures in readiness for the Exhibition at the Royal Academy!—so much time is taken up with their drinkings and their restings that they put me out of all patience. All professional men who rise above the common rank are men of great industry and application. Think of Giardini, the famous violin player! A nobleman once asked him what time must be given up in order to play well on that instrument, and he replied, 'Twelve hours a day for twenty years.' And Sir Joshua Reynolds used to say that for many years he laboured harder with his pencil than any mechanic had ever worked at his trade for bread. He used to say that it was impertinent for anybody to ask what time had been expended in the execution of a picture, as the work must be properly accomplished, without regard to time. I have heard him beg and pray of his sitters to come again and again, when they were perhaps quite tired out. If an artist showed him any imperfect or faulty produc-

tion, and alleged as an excuse the interference of the sitter or his friends, he would show great impatience, as he would not tolerate any excuse of that kind for bad work."

"The picture upon which you have been engaged some time is now, I suppose, nearly finished?" asked Ward.

"I am afraid it is," replied Northcote.

"Why do you say 'afraid,' sir?—I should think you would be glad!"

"Why, I am afraid it will not be in my power to carry it much further; not that I think it complete or anything like it. Finished! there never was a picture in this world finished, and there never will be!—how can a picture be finished when it's possible to carry it much further? Why, a man might spend his whole life over one picture and yet not finish it! Titian never considered his pictures finished; he put on them, indeed, *Titianus faciebat*, which, I suppose, means 'was at work upon,' whereas if he had meant that they were finished, he would have used the word *fecit*, instead of *faciebat*. Ah! it's very difficult to know when a picture is finished; it is what Sir Joshua didn't know, for there is scarcely a picture that he painted, whilst I was with him, that was not better at some stage during its progress, than when he left off. He was never satisfied; anything he did appeared nothing in his own eyes, compared with what he

thought it ought to be. Yes, as I said just now, I have heard him beg and pray of his sitters to come again and again, for he longed to have another trial, and another still. He used to say to me, 'Whilst working on my pictures I could go on for ever, but when once they are gone from me I care not if I never see them again.' Finished! *he* never thought his pictures finished or anything like it. Now, for my own part, I go on till I find my picture getting a little worse, and then I conclude that it is time for me to leave off. That picture is best finished which looks the most like nature, at the distance it is intended to be seen from. Those are not the best-finished pictures, you know, which merely have smoothness and high polish. If you call *that* finish, anybody may do it; it is merely the blending the colours whilst wet, and with the softening brush there's no difficulty in that. If that oily smoothness be finish, then Rembrandt and Sir Joshua must have been bad finishers, for in order to give the effect of nature, especially in bright objects, they put on touches so strong as quite to stand up from the canvas. We must not call a picture finished merely because the face looks like polished wood or ivory, for it is only a finished falsehood—a smooth lie. I am very pleased that my own works are affording my friends such satisfaction, for I am getting old now, and I was beginning to imagine myself out

of date and laid on the shelf. I was nearly four-score years when my *Entombment of Christ* was exhibited at the Academy, and the great success of that picture was an agreeable surprise to me, and it raised my spirits. Why, when I went among the other painters during 'varnishing days,' they showed me great attentions and made quite a fuss ; they thronged about me as if I had been an oracle ; it was all very pleasant, I must say. Jackson has been praising my *Princess Bridget Plantagenet looking upon her two brothers being smothered in the Tower*, and he paid me the compliment of saying that it reminded him of an 'Andrea Sacchi.' I told him that I was glad to hear him say that, as Andrea Sacchi was the painter of one of the four pictures which have been considered the most perfect in the world, namely, his *Dream of St. Romualdo*.

"What are the others ?" asked Ward.

"Raphael's *Transfiguration*, Domenichino's *Communion of St. Jerome*, and the *Descent from the Cross*, by Daniele da Volterra. For my own part, however, I must say that I prefer Raphael's *Miracle of Bolsena*, every part of which he painted himself, to his *Transfiguration*, which was painted in a great measure by Giulio Romano. The expression in the unbelieving priest is the finest thing I have ever seen in that respect—such a thorough scoundrel, who, though compelled to be convinced,

by the miracle, of the wafer turned into blood, yet is hiding his convictions from the surrounding spectators! He is, nevertheless, a handsome man, but the mixture of shame and villainy in his face cannot, in my opinion, be exceeded in the art. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who had laid it down as a maxim that a mixed passion could not be represented, and was therefore unwilling to admit that Raphael had done it in this instance, would insist that this mixed expression was not there, but that it was I who only fancied it. I am convinced it is there, as much as I am convinced of anything! Raphael, as I have said many times before, was greater in the mental part of the art than any painter who ever lived or probably ever will live—at least, this is my own opinion. . . . A young Frenchman called upon me some little time ago, and expressed to me his admiration for my picture, *The Little Princess made a Nun*. I asked him if he knew the subject. He said that he did not know who the people were, but he knew what they were doing, for he could see that it was a young princess given up to a convent by her mother; but what princess he could not tell. Had he known heraldry he would have known more about it, as the arms of England of that period are introduced. I was very glad to find that my picture told its own story, for that is a principal affair with me. I have always felt that a picture should so far explain

itself as not to be mistaken for any other subject ; and that, like a good riddle, if you cannot guess it, it should not lead you to make a wrong guess. Painters should always endeavour to paint from nature ; everything ought to be done from nature ; yes, every object ! It is this which gives the great charm to the works of Vandervelde ; his little fluttering flags at the mast-head look so real ; it is this look of reality that gives such an air of distress to his storm scenes, and it has never been equalled. Everything must be executed from nature ! ”

“ I cannot agree with you in this,” said Ward, “ without some qualification. For instance, in historical painting you could not always have the objects to paint from ! ”

“ But, then, that is the vice of history-painting ! However, as in other fictions, when a certain mixture of truth is brought in, it becomes extremely puzzling to know whether the whole is true or not. In history-painting, those parts which are done from nature give an air of reality to the whole, even to that which, being purely imaginary, cannot be done from nature. But, if a whole scene could be painted from nature, and finished whilst it was passing, it would be the finest thing that was ever seen in art ! The moment Antæus touched the earth he recovered his strength ; and so every time a painter has recourse to nature, he also regains fresh strength. And yet, after all, what a little way any of the

arts can go in the real imitation of nature; and this puts me in mind of an incident that occurred at the theatre, and which made a strong impression on me. I was once in the pit during the representation of a deep tragedy—I forget what it was—and there suddenly arose a great uproar in the gallery on account of some person's misconduct; the cry became, 'Throw him down! throw him over!' And then the consternation spread to the pit, and it turned the acting on the stage into milk and water; the see-sawing of the actors' arms seemed to have no meaning, compared with the sudden burst of real nature in the pit."

"With regard to Jackson," said Ward, "I have recently seen a portrait of his; it is a whole-length, and is the likeness of an army officer, an old man, dressed in one of those short jackets, without any skirts whatever—a dark green jacket with a great number of buttons on it."

"That is the officer's uniform," remarked Northcote, "and would be indispensable; but how has Jackson managed it?"

"He has put a light sky behind the figure, for a background, which seems to me a mistake. Do you think Sir Joshua would have arranged it in that manner?"

"Certainly not! Sir Joshua have arranged it in that way! Why, you remember how he has managed the dress of Colonel Tarleton, which was

the same as that you speak of?—by putting in the regimental colours behind, he has given it all the richness of a long robe. I remember, also, a portrait by Kneller of a lady of rank who was very short of stature, but he has brought in a long train around her and down to the very foreground, which gives a grandeur to it, without in the least disguising her real height. Where uncouthness of dress, or any other thing, is strongly felt, expedients must naturally be resorted to by the painter. A young artist showed me the other day a portrait of a little boy, whom he had dressed not only in a cap, but a hat and feathers over it, and I should have liked it better without them. It appears that the child had very little hair—but nature is always captivating, and you have an instance of what I am thinking of if you look at the infant in Sir Joshua's *Lady Cockburn and her Children*. Jackson does not paint to satisfy me, yet I can see he will always get on. He seems to know everything, and can tell you where to procure anything you want; there is a gentleness about him, too, and his total freedom from satire prevents him from ever being formidable. Satire is a dreadful hindrance to a man's getting on in the world, and still more so if joined to wit, for wit gives it wings and makes it fly. No; Jackson is a man that you cannot cast off. I see how it is that he has such friends among the great; he is in a measure necessary to their



JOHN JACKSON, R.A.

FROM THE PAINTING BY HIMSELF IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY



comfort ; it is that, more than his talent, which helps him on. To be sure, he has considerable ability as a painter ; he colours well, and his pictures have a rich texture about them which show a great deal of cleverness in the mechanical part. It is in the mental part where he seems to fail, and not entirely there, for his things are not offensive ; at least, not his portraits of men. I cannot say the same thing for his women ; but he makes up for failings by so many substitutes that I can see he will succeed. His women have a dowdy look ; they want that air of gentility, that fashionable look of high life which Lawrence gives, and which makes him so much sought after. Jackson has a bad notion of female dress ; he is fond of bringing in his great hat and feathers, which are very difficult to manage. I don't say they cannot be done, for Sir Joshua has done it, but it requires much delicacy of taste, more than Jackson has got. He is too fond of tawdry finery, so that some of his ladies look as if dressed out for a twopenny hop, or like those women that used to come, I remember, with shows to Plymouth, and who came out and paraded in front of their caravans with scarlet feathers stuck in sky-blue hats ! It is very dangerous to attempt finery in female portraits ; you are almost sure to make them vulgar by it. Indeed, it is the same in real life ; few ladies can bear much finery, unless they manage it with great taste. Now, there is

Mrs. —, for instance, who is a refined character and a gentlewoman, and when you see her in a morning she appears such; but I have seen her dressed out in an evening such a figure, that you would have supposed she was going to take a part at Sadler's Wells!"

"Jackson," observed Ward, "never harasses me by telling distressing or disgusting stories; on the contrary, his anecdotes are such as leave an agreeable impression, such as little bits of harmless wit and innocent fun."

"Ay, that he has from nature," replied Northcote; "it is this gentleness which makes him so much liked and secures him the patronage of the great. He could not do this unless it sprung from his natural disposition; it would be in vain to counterfeit it. I like constitutional virtues, though some men will not allow them to be virtues. This puts me in mind of a party I was once at, where the owner of the house had a bust of Garrick placed upon the top of a rich bureau. Some lady said to him in jest, 'Are you not afraid of his being so near your money?' 'Oh, no!' he replied, 'don't you see he is without hands?' Now, I like to trust to a man whose disposition is such as to put it, in a manner, out of his power to hurt me. If a man had once been a thief, though I might be told that he was reformed, and had become a man of principle, and would not give way to his propensity, I would

not like to trust him. No! I like to trust a man who, I know, not only would not, but could not, steal, whatever temptation might be put in his way—a man who, so to speak, is ‘without hands’ in that respect!”

“But,” said Ward, “there are some religious characters who think very differently from you; they would boast of their former vices by way of showing you the greatness of their conversion!”

“Such men,” continued Northcote, “I would never place my confidence in, let their professions be what they might; when a nice snug opportunity offered, I should expect that they would indulge in their old tricks again.”

## CHAPTER XIV

Northcote on newspaper criticism—Painters should not allow criticism to make them despondent—William Doughty, a pupil of Sir Joshua's—Artists should frequent each other's rooms—Northcote criticises Sir Joshua's "Death of Cardinal Beaufort"—"Ah! poor Grandi! he never looked up after Sir Joshua painted him as Warwick!"—On painting figures clad in robes or armour—A word concerning Turner and Constable—Beauty a necessity in a picture—Northcote on the study of anatomy—The works of Milton and Shakespeare—Anecdote of Garrick and the butcher's dog—About Mrs. Abington—Edmund Kean—"Players have no nature in them"—Six books that should be read—Certain pictures are out of place in private houses—Northcote looking at his own picture in the Guildhall—He speaks strongly in criticism of Milton—"Insects like us to represent the great Creator!"—The character of Jesus.

"SOME months ago," said Northcote, "memoirs, with engraved portraits of me, came out in two different magazines. Now, if all that had taken place some years ago, it might have benefited me, but it now comes too late to do me any good; it is like giving a man bread, when he has no teeth to eat it with."

"There is a much worse state of life," remarked Ward, "than that, and a man might be without both bread and teeth—old age and poverty. It is well if a man gets what you call his 'bread' at any time in life, however late!"

"To be sure, I can soak it!" responded Northcote.

"At a more active period of your life, you had not much need of these complimentary things—at

least for your own comfort—but now they should be a consolation to you, proving that you have not spent your life in vain."

"I have one consolation, certainly, in looking back on my past life. I have managed to attain the age of more than fourscore years without the critics having anything to fling in my face, which is something I do certainly think few people can say. With regard to the criticisms of works of art which have appeared in the newspapers, I used to think them very cruel and unreasonable. I remember once observing to Opie, after the newspapers had been attacking me, 'It is very dreadful that a person like myself, who wishes to spend his time quietly and innocently in his own favourite pursuit, cannot be let alone by these wretches!' 'No, no!' Opie said to me, 'you don't see the matter rightly; you have placed yourself on a pedestal, and the world is determined to make you prove your right to the position.' And so it is. Opie was right. A man in a conspicuous position must stand a strict examination; every fault of his own, or even of his family, will be raked up, and, if possible, brought against him; the world will not let him enjoy his distinction for nothing, for it is looked upon by them as an infringement of their common rights. You must pay for notoriety, as you pay for everything else. Whilst you are in obscurity, you think nobody notices you, and that

you are at liberty to please yourself ; but, if ever you become famous, all that you are now doing will be raked up and examined, and that with no good-natured eye ! Whenever I have finished an important work, I have always wondered how it would be received and how it would be criticised. But fools criticise, you know, and it's impossible to guess how fools will act under any circumstances. A rogue I fancy I can manage ; I can bait his trap ; he is a man of art, and you can trace him out. But a fool ! why, he's beyond me ! How they sometimes surprise you, for you cannot form the least guess how they will act on any occasion whatever ! Painters should never allow criticism to make them despondent, and they should not be too easily daunted by remarks made upon their works. Ah, this puts me in mind of poor Doughty,<sup>1</sup> of York, a pupil of Sir Joshua's. The poet Mason recommended him to Sir Joshua, and wrote a most pompous letter on the occasion—by the way, Mason appeared a most affected person. Well, Doughty had engraved in mezzotint Sir Joshua's portrait of Doctor Johnson very finely indeed, and on his

<sup>1</sup> William Doughty had a short and inglorious career. He left Sir Joshua's house in 1778, and during the following two years was in Ireland, London again, and, finally, in York, but met with no success and became discouraged. In 1780 he married a servant girl from Sir Joshua's and set sail with her for Bengal. The French and Spaniards, however, captured the vessel, the unfortunate Doughty was carried off by them as a prisoner to Lisbon, and there he died two years later.

showing it to Sir Joshua it pleased him exceedingly, and he said, 'I would advise you by all means *to stick to mezzotint*.' Now, this remark disconcerted poor Doughty very much ; he made the mistake of thinking that the remark implied that he was not likely to succeed *as a painter*, though, I believe, Sir Joshua did not mean that. Such a speech would have had no more effect in discouraging me than if it had been delivered to a barn-door. But Doughty was of a jealous, sulky temper, arising probably from despondency ;—despondency is a sad thing when there is talent, for it prevents exertion, and, consequently, improvement.

"I spoke just now about the criticism of fools, but we should always welcome the criticism which bears the mark of being true and honest. And it is for this reason why I always advise artists to frequent, whenever possible, each other's rooms. A man really ought to see what others are doing. Think how the plates for looking-glasses are polished ! Why, they rub two plates together till the one becomes a little convex and the other concave. They do the same with two other plates. They then rub the two convex ones together, and then the two concave ones. Now, this may serve as an example of the effect which painters have upon each other in regard to their studies. An artist must not shut himself up at home, but go about among the other painters and get rubbed ;

it may be disagreeable to his feelings, yet he will gain by it. Another thing, also, I advise, and that is that a painter should not shirk sending his works to the different exhibitions—it's a bad thing to shirk!"

"I was amused the other day," said Ward, "with a painter's criticism, for he had seen Titian's famous *Peter Martyr* at Venice, and his only observation was that 'it was too much glazed,' thus passing over all its mental qualities, for the sake of dwelling on a mere mechanical circumstance!"

"If it was glazed at all," said Northcote, "it must have been done by the French, whilst they had it in their possession, for I imagine that Titian's effects were brought out by scumbling, and not by glazing, except in his fine red and green draperies, which must have been glazed. I know the painter, however, to whom you refer, and am not surprised to hear this of him, for I assure you that when he comes here, I hardly know how to suit my conversation to him—it is like talking to a child.

"Whilst we are dwelling on the question of criticism, I will mention some ideas of mine with regard to Sir Joshua's *Death of Cardinal Beaufort*. Now, I have always considered that picture a failure in the mental part—such a failure, indeed, as I am still surprised at. In point of effect and colour, of course, it is grand, so fine a picture that Titian himself might have been afraid to hang a

picture of his alongside it. But who could suppose that the figure looking out in front of the King could be meant for the Earl of Warwick! Warwick, the king-maker! Why, 'tis more like a common porter; it hasn't the least elevation of character; it doesn't correspond at all with one's idea of such an energetic, tearing *devil* as he was. Sir Joshua painted the figure from poor Grandi, his colour-grinder, and I remember once telling Fuseli that Grandi was in a bad way, and that his health was failing. Fuseli looked very comical, and said, 'Ah! poor Grandi! He never looked up after Sir Joshua painted him as Warwick!' The fiend, too, is wrong, for instead of being an airy phantom, it is as palpable and substantial as any of the other figures."

"There is one thing," said Ward, "which has always struck me in the picture about which we are speaking, and that is the contrast between the horror of the scene and the fineness of the day; the sun seems to be shining into the room and filling, with rich, reflected light, the interior of the red curtains on which the dying Cardinal is lying. I think this, instead of weakening, heightens the impression by its contrast; besides, it was so true; Nature doesn't send either gloom or sunshine to suit the petty affairs of this world. I once witnessed the dying scene of a father surrounded by his weeping children. The day was extremely fine,

and the birds sang, as it were, in happy chorus around the cottage. I shall never forget the impression made on my mind by that violent contrast!"

"There is something in what you say," said Northcote, "but I really don't suppose Sir Joshua thought of it at the time. He probably wanted a showy effect, which led to what you have noticed. I must say that I have commenced many of my own paintings with a wish to represent some striking effect of light and shade—the *Jael and Sisera*, for instance. I thought dark armour would make a fine effect when brought against a light background, and I had thought of painting a figure so dressed lying on the sea-shore, with the white waves behind him. This I worked on through different stages, till it came out in its present shape. With regard to figures clad in either robes or armour, we should always remember that they are apt to look too short; they must be humoured and they will not look so ill. There is Titian's *Philip the Second*; it is different from what the King himself would have looked in armour; and Vandyke's *Charles the First* has all the grace and flexibility of a light coat. I have found the necessity of humouring figures in armour; one of the figures in my *Entombment of Christ* was done on this principle, for no man actually clad in armour could by any means have put himself in the attitude which I have

represented there. We must paint armour as it would appear if perfect in all its joints, which it never is, and, odd as it may seem, it is requisite to do this, otherwise no one will be satisfied with it."

"How do you like Turner's pictures?" asked Ward; "they have surprised me greatly, and their eccentricity exceeds anything I have ever witnessed."

"Why, Turner," said Northcote, "is both a genius and an idiot, and this is the only way I can account for the strange mixture of talent and folly one sees in his works."

"Let us rather call him," said Ward, "a genius run mad, which I fancy would please him better than the term 'idiot.'"

"Well," continued Northcote, smiling, "you may have it which way you like; it is only like the difference between six and half-a-dozen, only he cannot *always* be mad, for he sometimes has such fine things. . . . I think a great deal of Constable; he is struggling after nature, and may end in becoming a great painter. To find out, like Correggio, new beauties, which, though in nature, have never before been discovered, is to be indeed the great genius. I am sorry to hear about poor Wilkie!—they say he is very ill, and must go abroad for his health. What a pity it is that he should have so injured himself by intense application! How odd it is

that that which strengthens the mind should weaken and destroy the body! It seems very cruel in Nature to ordain it thus. . . .

“Painters should never neglect the quality of beauty in their pictures; beauty is a necessity in a picture, and all the best painters have sought after it without ceasing. The Greeks were famous for it. Guido, to be sure, carried it too far—to insipidity—by sacrificing expression to it. I remember that on showing Sir Joshua Reynolds my picture of *Jael and Sisera*, I expressed a fear that I had made my figure of Jael too beautiful for the character, and he said to me, ‘She cannot be too beautiful! What made Guido but his beauty? No, no; the woman is as well as possible.’ A year or two back, I saw a large historical picture by Hilton at the exhibition at Somerset House. That work was conceived with great ability, but it wanted beauty, and consequently was worth little. Now, beauty is a quality that cannot be too much insisted on in painting. The reason why West’s gallery is so much neglected, is the want of this quality. His pictures, whatever merit they may possess in other respects, do not give pleasure, and it is owing to their want of beauty. His *Alexander, King of Scotland, attacked by a Stag, whilst hunting on horseback* is the finest of all subjects; what opportunities it offered! But West has rendered it uninteresting by the want of beauty, not only in the King but in the animals as

well. Oh, how differently Rubens would have done it! Fuseli, speaking of one of Rubens' horses in a lion-hunt, exclaimed, with an oath, 'It is like a beautiful virgin!' The apparent distress of such a creature must touch every one who has any sensibility, whereas, were it an ugly clumsy animal we should feel much less emotion. Yes, we must have beauty! Some years ago, the study of anatomy was much talked about in the schools of the Academy, and the students attended anatomical lectures and dissecting rooms with great enthusiasm. The half-dozen lectures, however, on that subject, which were delivered by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Anthony Carlisle, Professor of Anatomy in the Academy, were despised by many people as trifling and nearly useless. They thought they had found out the secret of becoming Michael Angelos! Anatomy is very well in its place, and very proper certainly, as a man cannot understand too well that which he has to represent, but it is only one thing amongst many, and not by any means the first. What does it signify, indeed, how anatomically correct a figure may be if it is without grace, beauty, or expression! Besides, those who think so much about anatomy are apt to be too fond of displaying their knowledge, and often, indeed, represent their figures as if going about without their skins, which is very disgusting to me. Sir Joshua Reynolds knew nothing of anatomy; he knew nothing whatever as to what

was below the surface, what was under the skin!"

"But," interrupted Ward, "did he not attend the anatomical lectures at the Academy?"

"Why, yes," returned Northcote, "he felt himself obliged to do that, as he was President; but he used generally to go fast asleep! I don't mean to hold up his example as proper to be followed in this respect, but only to show what he did without it. He might, and probably would, have done better with it; we see, however, what he did without it, and what such men as Goltzius did with it, which proves that it is not the only requisite for a fine painter. I admit its great usefulness, and no more. I suspect it was Haydon who made a great stir about anatomy!"

"Yes," said Ward, "it was Haydon. He was a strong advocate for it, and dissected horses and donkeys by way of preparing himself for a great picture, in which those animals were to be introduced."

"Well, I commend his industry, certainly," returned Northcote. "If painters will only keep this in its right place, they will do well, for they must recollect that the greatest requisite for painting animals is to have an exquisite feeling for their character. If they forget this, whilst attending so much to their anatomy, they will not succeed. The character of a fine horse, for instance, is that of

timid gracefulness, something like that of an elegant lady. Oh ! what beautiful led horses I used to see at Rome, and how they used to delight me by the way in which they curveted and played about ! Lord ! I remember them now, like beautiful visions !

“I have been reading an old book—it was written in the time of Charles the Second—which has reference to the painters from Cimabue to Raphael, and the author in his preface expresses the opinion that the chief beauties of painting are the imitations of those delicacies of nature which the vulgar overlook.”

“Sir Thomas Lawrence,” observed Ward, “once said the same thing, for he remarked: ‘We are unfortunate—we talk in a language which is not well understood.’”

“Why, that may be said,” continued Northcote, “of poetry as well as painting. Milton’s works, before they had got the Tower-stamp, were little regarded by the world. It was the same with Shakespeare; his plays were little known before the time of Garrick, and very seldom acted. Garrick’s great forte was the strong imitation of nature, and he found that Shakespeare would answer his purpose best, and he brought the plays out accordingly; new editions then came out, and they became talked about. Dryden, indeed, had praised them before that time, but with great diffidence, only venturing to say that they were superior

to the plays of Ben Jonson. Now, Garrick was the same in acting as Sir Joshua was in painting ; they both brought back their arts from that artificial stuff which had been so long the fashion, to the genuine representation of nature, and this was the cause of their great success. Garrick, though so great in tragedy, was more adapted, in my opinion, to comedy, and it seems Sir Joshua thought so too, for in his portrait of him between Tragedy and Comedy, the actor is evidently allowing himself to be drawn away by the latter. Garrick had a great turn for the comic ; nothing of that nature seemed to escape his attention, as is evinced by his anecdote of the butcher's dog, which I daresay you have heard."

Ward said that he had never heard the anecdote.

" Why, the story is this. One night, whilst Garrick was playing his part in a tragedy at Drury Lane, to a crowded audience, a butcher happened to be sitting in the pit with his bull-dog beside him. The heat being excessive, the butcher after some time took off his wig, and unconsciously stuck it on the dog's head a moment. Garrick—and it was in the very deepest part of the play—drew near to the front of the stage, and happening to cast his eye on the ludicrous scene of a dog in a wig, he was so tickled by it that it was with great difficulty he refrained from a burst of laughter, and was obliged to retire from the scene as quickly as he could.

Garrick was a great actor, but I remember somebody telling me that he had seen him when he first came out in Goodman's Fields, and that he was then particularly fine, his acting at that time having none of the stage tricks which he afterwards acquired. There is nothing like *nature* in acting or anything else. I remember Mrs. Abington's acting very well; how exquisitely she played the part of a fine lady! Why, Miss Farren's acting, though it was so much admired, was no more to be compared with it than a dish-cloth with the finest lawn! Whoever did not see Mrs. Abington has never seen a real, fine lady. I had seen her act at Plymouth—she was Miss Barton in those days—and I well remember how delighted I was with her, for she had an exquisite manner. I recollect she used to call and see an old woman who lived opposite my father's, and, Lord! I used to see her go in! She did it in such a beautiful manner; I shall never forget it. When I came to London, I was not long, you may be sure, in going to see her, and though Garrick played with her then, I did not see him—*she* filled the stage for me. By the way, did you not bring the actor, Edmund Kean, here to see me many years ago?"

"No," responded Ward, "but I remember trying to induce him to come. One November day—it was in 1813, I think—he and his wife came to lodge in the same house as I did in Cecil Street. It was

after the Christmas holidays, however, when the manager of Drury Lane brought him out; he first appeared as Shylock, and afterwards in *Richard the Third*, and set the whole city in a ferment about him. He was beset with artists wanting to take his portrait in every mode, shape and size that could well be imagined, all of whom he 'thanked for the honour they did him'—as he used to express it—but they could make nothing of him, owing to his sad want of punctuality. I suggested to you that you should offer, through me, to paint Kean's portrait, for I felt that he would be punctual with one of your standing, and moreover you seemed desirous of conversing with such a second Garrick. You consented to my suggestion, and I was very pleased, as I wanted to hear the conversation between yourself and the actor. I mentioned the matter to Kean; he, in his customary way, remarked that 'he was much obliged to Mr. Northcote for the honour he did him,' and we arranged a certain morning upon which we should both proceed together to your house. The day at length arrived, I got him from his lodgings, and thought I had him all safe, when lo! upon arriving at Charing Cross, the idea came into Kean's head that he would like to have a ride into the country, and go he would in spite of all I could urge to the contrary. I must apologise to yourself, he said, and tell you that his health required fresh air and exercise that fine morning, and that 'he

## SIX BOOKS THAT SHOULD BE READ 245

would do himself the honour' of waiting upon you at any other time you would name!"

"I have never liked the idea," said Northcote, "of painting players; there is no nature in them. I might have painted Kemble, but I could never bring my mind to do it. You know what Opie said when asked why he did not paint the players—'Confound them! they have everybody's faces but their own; what can I make of them?'

"I must tell you that I had a young painter here the other day who begins to see the necessity of reading; he said that he had not had much time for it yet, and asked what books I would recommend him to read. I told him that I always consider there are six books which, in my opinion, every man ought to read, for they are indispensable. The young man said he would feel much obliged to me if I would name them to him. 'Certainly,' I said; 'the first is the Bible; that there can be no dispute about.' 'Oh, no!' he said. 'Well, then, the next is the Discourses of Epictetus; the third, *Æsop's Fables*, which you should have by heart, for scarcely a day will pass over your head but you will either be deterred from some actions, or confirmed in others, by them; Lord Bacon's Essays you should read, for they will give you a deep insight into human nature, and indeed into almost every other thing; the fifth is *Don Quixote*.' He smiled when I mentioned this, and I said: 'You think, I suppose, that this is a boy's

book, but I can tell you that if you want to know in what the character of a true gentleman consists, you will find it nowhere so well as in that book. The sixth is *Robinson Crusoe*, which I do not know is so absolutely necessary as the others, but still it will teach you to know the value of the comforts we enjoy in society, better, I believe, than any book you can lay your hands on.' . . .

"A rich man whom I know," said Ward, "is just now in a dilemma. He has been travelling on the Continent, and whilst in Italy he ordered copies from some of the pictures of the highest reputation in that country. He had intended them for his house in the North of England, but now, when he comes to unpack them, he finds that they won't do at all, as the subjects are of so dreadful a nature that his friends — especially his lady friends — exclaim against him, and call him a cruel monster for having made such a choice; he is thus unable to put the pictures up!"

"Why, what pictures had he pitched upon?" asked Northcote.

"One of them," said Ward, "was Guido's *Massacre of the Innocents*, and another was one of Domenichino's, in which a saint is represented as having her breasts torn off with red-hot pincers."

"Oh!" exclaimed Northcote, "it's a sad mistake to think that such pictures will do in private houses! Now, in the churches for which they were painted,

the case is totally different ; they are intended to make an awful impression there—to give a dignity to religion by showing to the people what torments have been suffered for the sake of it ; besides, with the accompaniments of solemn music and religious ceremonies, they become grand and deep-wrought tragedies ! But they won't do when they are transplanted into an English gentleman's breakfast-room, or into an exhibition where people go to be amused and to be merry. Guido and Domenichino !—great names both of them ! Ah, I sometimes wonder what the world will eventually think of me as a painter. Some years ago, I remember, being in the City, I took it into my head to call and see the pictures in the Guildhall, one of which, the *Death of Wat Tyler*, I painted myself ; there were also some of Opie's best pictures there, especially his *Murder of David Rizzio*. The man who carried the keys and opened the door of the Council Chamber for me, knew not who I was, so I thought it a good opportunity to hear something about my picture. I asked him who was the painter of *that* picture—pointing to my *Wat Tyler*. His answer was, 'I really don't know !' Had I been wise, I should have stopped after such an answer as that, but, like a fool, I must go on, so I again asked, 'Is it considered a fine picture, I wonder ? Have you ever heard it spoken of as such ?' 'No, sir,' said the man, 'I cannot say I have.' 'Have you heard

of Opie ?' I continued. 'Oh, yes ; I have heard of *Mr. Opie* !' I had then had enough and came hurriedly away."

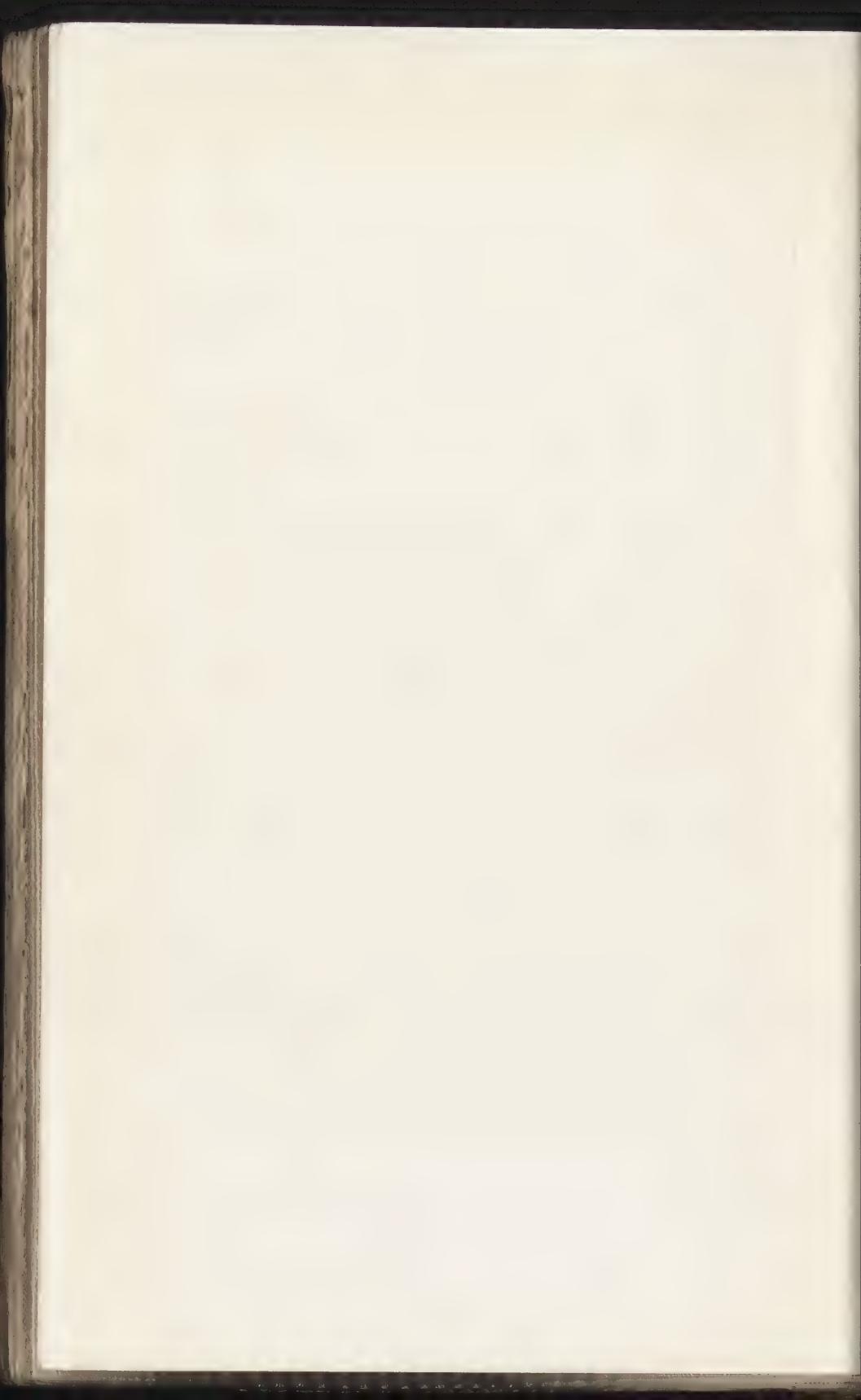
"How do you like Danby's picture, *The Israelites passing the Red Sea* ?" asked Ward.

"I rarely look at such things as that, and Martin's pictures, as I consider them as mere tricks, and not historic art—the mere work of young beginners. However, though I am not much disposed to like them, yet I think that the charge of profaneness brought by the newspaper *John Bull* against the picture of Martin in the Suffolk Street Exhibition, wherein he has introduced the Supreme Being, applies still more strongly to Milton, who has not only introduced the Almighty but has made Him talk ! Now, when it is recollected that Milton could only put his own words into the mouth of the Deity, it appears to me highly presumptuous. How differently is it done in the Book of Job ! With what excessive grandeur is the Deity introduced there ! Now, when it is considered that no poet can make his hero speak more wisely than himself—for in fact it is *himself* that speaks—nor a painter make his hero look wiser than he himself does—for you cannot make anything above yourself !—it is indeed a very great boldness to attempt to introduce the Deity into either poetry or painting ! There is West's picture, *Christ healing the Sick*, and I remember saying to a friend, as I looked up at it,



JAMES NORTHCOTE, R.A., IN HIS 84TH YEAR

FROM A DRAWING BY JAMES LONSDALE

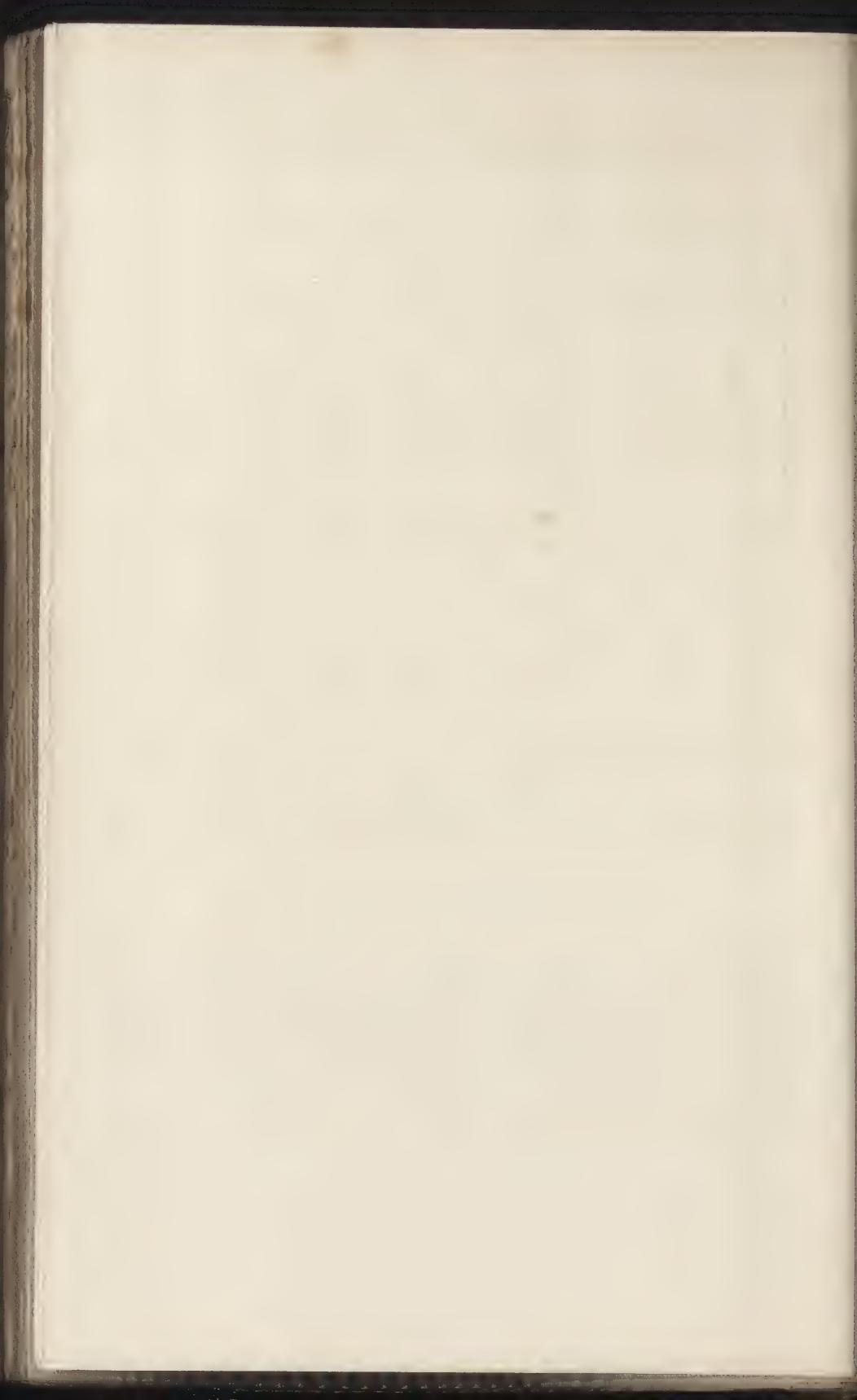


‘How strange that a man always paints himself in his pictures ; there is not a head there that looks wiser than West did himself !’ What I have just said about Martin introducing the Supreme Being, and about Milton making Him talk, I feel very strongly. Insects like us to represent the great Creator !—for, after all, we are no more than insects ; for my own part, I could never see that I was better than a black worm. I fancy I should like to possess some positive quality, and ’tis on this account I should wish to be a lion, for then I should have strength, courage, etc. ; but now I am like what Opie once said, ‘too little for a man, and too big for a monkey, what are you ?’”

“Not long ago,” said Ward, “you yourself painted a sacred picture, and I greatly admired it ;—it was *Christ sinking under the Cross*.”

“Oh !” exclaimed the great painter’s sister, “Jim frequently appeared so full of thought when he was working at that picture that there was no speaking to him !”

“The work you mention,” said Northcote, “was immediately purchased by Lord Grosvenor for the altar-piece in his private chapel. . . . But Jesus Christ cannot be painted ! Raphael has done it well—Guido has, perhaps, done it the best—and yet, after all, it cannot be done, for it is only a small part of the character of Jesus which can ever be expressed.”



## INDEX

The names of pictures are printed in Italic.

ABINGTON, Mrs., 243  
 Academy, Royal. *See* Royal Academy  
 Actors, on, 245  
 Affectation, Northcote's dislike of, 22  
 Albani, Cardinal, and Benjamin West, 154  
*Alexander, King of Scotland, attacked by a Stag*, West's, 238  
 America, on the form of government in, 81  
 Anatomy, study of, 239  
*Angelo, Michael, the figure in armour on tomb of Julius II.*, 139  
 Animals, instinct of, 131  
     cruel treatment of, in England, 133  
     blessing of, by the Roman Catholic Church, 133  
 Anne, Queen, Sir Godfrey Kneller's little speech to, 185  
*Argyll visited, while asleep in prison, by his Chief Enemy*, Northcote's, 17  
 Armour, how to paint figures clad in, 236  
 Art, eminent painters should assist students of, 33  
     state of, in Rome, 42  
     what should be studied by students of, 68  
     treatises on, not of much value, 100  
     Northcote's great love for, 168  
     to engage numbers of candidates only way to advance, 183  
     the great progress of, 183  
     finest works of, but feeble attempts to imitate nature, 198  
     criticisms on, in newspapers, 231  
*Arthur and Hubert*, Northcote's, 12  
     the colouring of, 106  
 Artists, why some persons become, 31  
     Ward's warning to those intending to become, 181  
 Authors, their knowledge of painting, 89  
     not the greatest or wisest of men, 90  
*Bacchus and Ariadne*, Titian's, 64  
 Banks, Sir Joseph, his encountering of dangers and privations, 169  
 Barry, James, 31  
 Barton, Frances. *See* Abington, Mrs. Battoni, Pompeo, his great conceit, 174  
 Beauty, value of, in portraits of ladies, 191  
 Beechey, Sir William, his ignorance of Court etiquette, 151  
     how he offended George III., 152  
*Bentivoglio, Cardinal*, Vandyke's, 51  
 Bernini, the originality of, 140  
 Betty, William Henry West, the boy-actor, Northcote painting portrait of, 23  
     gracefulness of his acting, 86  
 Bonaparte, Napoleon, the cause of his own ruin, 126  
     Northcote's portrait of, 156  
     his handsome appearance, 157  
     his firmness, 157  
     how Titian, Vandyke and Reynolds would have represented him in a portrait, 158  
     his unfitness for married life, 200  
 Books, six, recommended by Northcote, 245  
 Boringdon, Lord, his reluctant feelings towards Johnson and Goldsmith, 84  
 Boydell, John, his initiation of the Shakespeare Gallery, 11  
     offers Northcote several commissions, 12  
     his Shakespeare Gallery a noble undertaking, 113

Breadth, the quality of, in Titian's pictures, 50  
 — reason why many painters lack, 55  
 — Vandyke deficient in, 56  
 — how true, may be obtained, 56  
 — one of the characteristics of a great mind, 69  
 — Velasquez famous for, 69  
 — works of Richard Wilson and Reynolds possess, 69  
*Burdett, Sir Francis*, Northcote's, 35  
*Burial of the Young Princes in the Tower, The*, Northcote's, 12  
 Burke, Edmund, his conversations, 196  
 Byron, Lord, 94

*CARLISLE, Sir Anthony*, 239  
*Carlisle, Earl of*, Sir Joshua Reynolds', 75  
 Caroline, Queen, her anecdote of Mrs Siddons, 83  
 — her mischievous wit, 84  
 Cawse, John, 197  
 Chantrey, Sir Francis, 140  
*Chapeau de Paille*, Rubens', 60  
 Charles Edward Stuart, Prince, 48  
*Charles I. on the white horse*, Vandyke's, 76, 102  
*Charles II.*, Sir Godfrey Kneller's, 210  
*Charles II.*, Sir Peter Lely's, 210  
 Charlotte, Queen, and Sir William Beechey, 151  
*Charlotte, Queen*, Gainsborough's, 160  
*Christ healing the Sick*, West's, 248  
*Christ sinking under the Cross*, Northcote's, 249  
 Clarence, Duke of, his visit to Northcote's studio, 23  
 — and the grocer's wife, 173  
 Claude, 106  
 Clement XIV., his tolerant spirit, 48  
 Cobbett, William, his "English Grammar," 93  
*Cockburn, Lady, and her Children*, Sir Joshua Reynolds', 226  
 Collins, William, and his membership of the Royal Academy, 164  
 Colour, indulgence in violent effects of, one of the vices of English painters, 63  
 — of the English complexion difficult to represent, 68  
 Colouring, fine, definition of, 63  
 Colouring, chaste, the best models for, 63  
 — fine, Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, an example of, 64  
 — Titian the greatest colourist in the world, 88  
 — John Jackson's opinion of Northcote's, 97  
 — how Titian obtained the grey tints in the flesh of his portraits, 100  
 — gaudy, to be avoided, 101  
 — Vandyke a fine colourist, 101  
 — Raphael a great colourist, 103  
 — how Vandyke united his colours, 104  
 — the use of yellow in, 105  
 — one of Northcote's methods of, 106  
 — William Gandy a great colourist, 107  
 — Sir Joshua Reynolds prohibited the use of many colours, 108  
 — a portrait-painter must not encumber himself with colours, 189  
*Communion of St Jerome*, Domenichino's, 222  
 Constable, John, 237  
*Cornaro family*, Titian's, 53  
*Coronation Scene*, Rubens', 61  
 Correggio, 116  
 Cosway, Mrs., her superiority to circumstances, 79  
 Court life and society, in praise of, 81  
*Crewe, Master*, Sir Joshua Reynolds', 148

*Death of Cardinal Beaufort*, Sir Joshua Reynolds', criticism of, 234  
*Death of Mortimer, The*, Northcote's, 12  
*Death of Wat Tyler, The*, Northcote's, 247  
 Denner, Balthasar, 55  
*Descent from the Cross*, Daniele da Volterra's, 222  
 Domenichino, his purity of mind great factor in his career, 120  
 "Don Quixote," its fine language, 95  
 Doughty, William, a despondent pupil of Reynolds, 232  
*Dream of St Romualdo*, Andrea Sacchi's, 222  
 Dryden, John, and the plays of Shakespeare, 241  
 Dupont, Gainsborough, 161  
 Durno, James, 43

EDDYSTONE, quarrelsome men on the, 123  
 Edward IV., Northcote and the period of, 195  
*Edward IV. and his Queen*, Northcote's, 12  
 England, damp climate of, 40  
 — art of painting does not receive sufficient encouragement in, 69  
 — why historical painting was not encouraged in, 70  
 — how the position of a painter is regarded in, 176  
 — the noble families of, 195  
*Entombment of Christ*, Northcote's, 222, 236

*Falstaff in the clothes-basket*, James Durno's, 43  
*Falstaff and his recruits*, James Durno's, 43  
 Farington, Joseph, his rule of the Royal Academy, 165  
*Farnese family*, Titian's, 53  
 Farren, Elizabeth, 243  
 Fiamingo, his fine figures of children, 109  
 — the originality of, 140  
 Fielding, Henry, the novels of, 96  
 Foster, Thomas, his sad career, 200  
 Friendship, the delusion of, 202  
 Fuseli, Henry, his glowing verbal descriptions of his own works, 118  
 — his bearing not that of a gentleman, 125  
 — his advice in regard to young men intended for the art of painting, 181

GAHAGAN, Sebastian, his bust of the second Pitt, 138  
 Gainsborough, Thomas, jealousy between Reynolds and, 159  
 — his attitude towards the Royal Academy, 160  
 Gandy, William, his grand colouring, 107  
 Gardner, Daniel, his advice as to portraits of beautiful women, 191  
 Garrick, David, and his prompter, 208  
 — bust of, a lady's remark regarding, 228  
 — anecdote of, and the butcher's dog, 242  
*Garrick, David*, Sir Joshua Reynolds', 208

Genius, arbitrariness of, 124  
 Gentleman, a true, defined, 125  
 George III. commands West to explain certain sketches to bishops, 155  
*George III. on horseback*, Northcote's, 94  
 George IV., his kind offer to Northcote, 121  
 — his gift to William Owen, 178  
*George IV.*, Sir Thomas Lawrence's, 147  
 Giardini, Felix, 219  
 "Gil Blas," its fine language, 95  
 Giordano, Luca, his executive power, 99  
 God, introduction of, into poetry or painting, deprecated, 248  
 Godwin, Mrs., 91  
 Goldsmith, Oliver, his conversations, 196  
 Goltzius, 240  
 Government, on the form of, in America, 81  
 Grandi, Sebastian, 18, 235  
*Grantham, Lord, and his Brothers*, Sir Joshua Reynolds', 74

HALS, Frans, in praise of, 52  
 — his great mechanical power, 53  
 Hamilton, Gavin, 43  
*Hamilton, Sir William*, Sir Joshua Reynolds', 148  
 Haydon, Benjamin Robert, his ambition, 31  
 — as an historical painter, 70  
 — his painting-room and its accommodations, 170  
 — and the study of anatomy, 240  
 Hazlitt, William, his records of conversations with Northcote, 14  
 — his antipathy to high rank and station, 83  
 — his mistake in a certain essay, 91  
 Hilton, William, 238  
 Historical painters, their foreground figures, 119  
 Historical painting, why it has been encouraged in certain countries, 70  
 — should be termed poetical painting, 116  
 — works of Benjamin West, 188  
 Homer, 95, 155  
 Hoppner, John, his portraits of ladies, 190

## INDEX

Hoppner, John, a fine portrait-painter, 198  
 Hussey, Giles, 31

*Interior of the Council Chamber at Venice*, Titian's, 60  
*Ippolito, Cardinal*, Titian's, 51  
 Ireland, William Henry, the literary forger, 88  
*Israelites passing the Red Sea, The*, Francis Danby's, 248  
 Italy, climate of, in praise of, 40  
 —— lower classes in, 41

JACKSON, John, Ward's friendship with, 16  
 —— as model for Argyll in Northcote's great picture, 17  
 —— his cold reception of a certain painter, 171  
 —— his portraits of ladies, 179  
 —— his whole-length portrait of an army officer, 225  
 —— his freedom from satire, 226  
 —— his portraits of ladies compared with those of Lawrence, 227  
 —— his gentleness of manner natural to him, 228  
*Jael and Sisera*, Northcote's, 236, 238  
*Jersey, Lady*, Sir Thomas Lawrence's, 148  
 Jesus, impossible to express the character of, 249  
 Job, Book of, grandeur of its language, 95, 248  
 Johnson, Dr., his conversations, 196

KEAN, Edmund, 88  
 —— anecdote of, 243  
 Kemble, John Philip, deference paid to, 84  
 —— acting in Ireland's "Vortigern," 89  
 —— Northcote and, 245  
 Kneller, Sir Godfrey, his little speech to Queen Anne, 185  
 —— want of nature in his portraits of ladies, 190  
 —— his portraits of men, 191  
 —— his portraits lack discrimination of character, 209  
 —— his whole-length portraits, 211  
 —— how he painted a whole-length of a lady of short stature, 226  
 Knighton, Sir William, his difficulties and ultimate success, 126

Knighton, Sir William, his quarrel with Northcote about latter's portrait of Sir Walter Scott, 129

LAW, profession of the, compared with that of painting, 198  
 Lawrence, Sir Thomas, dress of his day in his favour, 76  
 —— his interest in one of Titian's portraits in the Louvre, 144  
 —— a lady's complaint regarding his broken promises, 145  
 —— an illustration of his popularity, 147  
 —— his portraits of ladies, 149  
 —— his mistake at the Royal Academy dinner, 149  
 —— his expensive picture-frames, 163  
 Lely, Sir Peter, 99  
 —— the quality of gracefulness in his portraits, 192  
 Leo X. and Raphael, 176  
*Little Princess made a Nun, The*, Northcote's, 223  
 London, Northcote's early struggles in, 29  
 —— Northcote disliked painting away from, 36  
 —— misery and suffering to be seen, 41  
 —— the Lord Mayor's procession, 115  
 Louvre Gallery, value of studying in, 141

MANNERS, pleasant, importance of, 123  
 Marie Antoinette, 8  
*Marlborough Family*, Sir Joshua Reynolds', 54  
*Marriage at Cana*, Paul Veronese's, 61  
 Martin, John, the charge of profanity brought against one of his works, 248  
*Martyrdom of St Lawrence, The*, Titian's, 120  
*Massacre of the Innocents*, Guido's, 246  
*Meeting of the Young Princes, The*, Northcote's, 12  
 Mengs, Anton Raphael, his pompous bearing, 175  
 Milton, his works not immediately popular, 241  
 —— his introduction of the Almighty into his poetry criticised, 248

*Miracle of Bolsena*, Raphael's, 222  
 Montalto, Cardinal. *See* Sixtus V.  
*Murder of the Princes in the Tower*, Northcote's, 117  
*Murder of David Rizzio*, Opie's, 247  
 Mythology, classical, Northcote's dislike of, 155

NAPOLEON. *See* Bonaparte  
 Nature, the modesty of, 101  
 —— always in harmony, 102  
 —— finest works of art are but feeble attempts to imitate, 198  
 —— everything should be executed from, 224

*Newcastle, Duchess of*, Sir Thomas Lawrence's, 148

Newspaper writers, certain, the affected expressions of, 93

Newspapers, art-criticisms in, 231

Newton, Sir Isaac, a saying of, 92

Northcote, James, birth, 1  
 —— early difficulties, 2  
 —— apprenticed to trade, 3  
 —— sees Reynolds at public meeting, 4  
 —— becomes pupil of Reynolds, 5  
 —— returns to native county, 7  
 —— resolves to visit Italy, 7  
 —— departs from England, 8  
 —— difficulties of the journey, 9  
 —— arrives in Rome, 10  
 —— studies at the Vatican and in churches, 10  
 —— employed to paint on commission, 11  
 —— his Italian honours, 11  
 —— returns to Devonshire, 11  
 —— permanently settles in London, 11  
 —— his work for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, 12  
 —— elected Royal Academician, 12  
 —— his great industry, 13  
 —— his literary work, 13  
 —— his conversational powers, 14, 167  
 —— in praise of Italy, 19  
 —— his enthusiasm for the old masters, 20  
 —— his indulgence in personalities, 21  
 —— his dislike of affectation, 22  
 —— Duke of Clarence visits his studio and gives him offence, 23  
 —— his death, 26

OPIE, John, the chaste colouring of his pictures, 64  
 —— one of his sayings regarding the Royal Academy, 163  
 —— greatest man known to Northcote, 197  
 —— his unfitness for married life, 199  
 —— a great rival of Northcote, 206  
 —— the decline of his popularity, 214  
 —— his opinion of newspaper criticism, 231

*Orpheus*, Parmigiano's, 60

Owen, William, his breakdown in health, 177

PAINTERS, English, careless finishing the vice of, 66  
 —— English, no nation so well qualified to excel as the, 70  
 —— more humble and modest than poets and authors, 90  
 —— should avoid seeing inferior works of art, 103  
 —— should not offer verbal descriptions of their works, 117  
 —— the arrogance and impudence of certain, 170  
 —— conceit among, 174  
 —— how the position of, is regarded in England, 176  
 —— why many persons become, 184  
 —— must be men-of-all-work, 185  
 —— must obtain patronage by every possible means, 186  
 —— should never desert a run of employment, 205  
 —— adverse criticism not to make them despondent, 232  
 —— advised to frequent each other's rooms, 233

Painting, the art of, not sufficiently encouraged in England, 69  
 —— Northcote's methods of, 97  
 —— Fuseli's advice regarding young men intended for profession of, 181  
 —— is beyond humanity, 198

Paris, civility of the lower orders in, 140  
 —— value of studying in the Louvre, 141

Parr, Dr Samuel, his credulousness as to Ireland's counterfeit play, 88

*Peel, Sir Robert*, Northcote's, 147

*Pembroke family*, Vandyke's, 53

## INDEX

*Philip II.*, Titian's, 236  
 Picture, how to commence a, 108  
 —— advantage of watching, by fading twilight, 217  
 —— great, method adopted by Northcote previous to painting a, 218  
 —— impossible to really finish a, 220  
 —— beauty a necessity in, 238  
 Picture-dealing, the trade of, 122  
 Pictures, great, why rich persons often secure, 122  
 —— certain, not suitable for private houses, 246  
 —— the four perfect, of the world, 222  
 Pindar, Peter. *See* Wolcot  
 Pitt, William, the younger, Northcote's antipathy towards, 134  
 —— a great genius, 137  
 Pius VI., vanity of, 48  
 Plagiarism, discussion on, 142  
 Poets, their knowledge of painting, 89  
 —— Northcote's dislike of, 90  
 Politeness, true, no rules for, 124  
 Pope, Alexander, 94, 95  
 Portrait-painters must not encumber themselves with colours, 189  
 —— dishonest stratagem of an obscure painter, 203  
 —— themselves, not the sitters, the best judges of good work, 208  
 —— must not represent their sitters as smiling, 212  
 —— difficult subjects for, 213  
 —— should not attempt finery in female portraits, 227  
 Portrait-painting not to be despised by ambitious painters, 189  
 Portraits, groups of, Titian's skill in painting, 53  
 —— why sitters are dissatisfied with their, 93  
 —— figures in, should be as fine as possible, 109  
 —— a laugh becomes harassing when fixed in a portrait, 110  
 —— to paint a lady's portrait is a hazardous undertaking, 190  
 —— are inadequate substitutes for absent friends, 193  
 —— a method of proceeding with a portrait, 207  
 —— are wanted by those who view them with the eyes of affection, 215  
*Princess Bridget Plantagenet looking upon her two brothers being smothered in the Tower*, Northcote's, 222  
 Print-sellers, necessary for painter to employ, 121  
 Professional men, industry of, contrasted with that of common labourers, 219  
 Publishers of prints, on the profits made by, 121  
*Raising of Lazarus*, Sebastiano del Piombo's, 85  
 Raphael, his gentleness, 50  
 —— greatest painter in the world, on account of mental, as distinct from executive, power, 57  
 —— all his portraits carefully finished, 66  
 —— a great colourist, 103  
 —— his purity of mind great factor in his career, 120  
 —— Leo X. and, 176  
 —— what he would think of his own attempts to imitate nature, 198  
 Rembrandt, 221  
 Reynolds, Sir Joshua, his acceptance of undesirable work, 33  
 —— compared with Titian, 54  
 —— his reputation rests on mental, not executive, power, 58  
 —— his landscape backgrounds not always appropriate, 65  
 —— mannerism in his portraits, 67  
 —— his female complexions not as true as those of Vandyke, 68  
 —— striking individuality in his portraits, 69  
 —— as a genius, 71  
 —— not to be servilely copied, 72  
 —— his intense feeling for character, 73  
 —— compared with Vandyke, 74  
 —— his pictures difficult to ruin, 75  
 —— his resolute industry, 77  
 —— how he painted portraits of children, 78  
 —— superior to ill-natured criticism, 79  
 —— homage paid to him, 80  
 —— deeper observer than Johnson or Goldsmith, 85  
 —— how the effects of some of his finest pictures were destroyed, 97

Reynolds, Sir Joshua, would associate only with gifted men, 103  
 — excessive glazing of his portraits, 110  
 — his opinion of talkative painters, 118  
 — why he employed poor persons as models, 121  
 — how he would have represented Bonaparte, 158  
 — his jealousy of Gainsborough, 159  
 — his simple picture-frames in the Royal Academy exhibitions, 163  
 — his reticent manner of conversing, 167  
 — fine example of modesty, 172  
 — his competition with Romney, 178  
 — his appearance of childlike simplicity, 186  
 — grace, character, and momentary expression, in his portraits, 192  
 — his portraits of lovers, 193  
 — his plan of attracting attention before he became famous, 204  
 — how he commenced his portraits, 207  
 — his painting of draperies, 211  
 — never satisfied with his works, 220  
 — how he painted the dress of an army officer, 225

*Richard II.* and *Bolingbroke*, Northcote's, 12

Robinson, Mrs., the beautiful, 59

Roman, Giulio, and Raphael's *Transfiguration*, 222

Rome, state of art in, 42  
 — Northcote's adventure in the Vatican, 44  
 — not headquarters of bigotry and intolerance, 45  
 — the Pope giving his blessing in streets of, 46  
 — what Northcote studied in, 141

*Romeo and Juliet*, Northcote's, 12

Romney, George, and the Royal Academy, 164  
 — his competition with Reynolds, 178  
 — his humility and subserviency to certain men, 185  
 — his remark concerning his son, 214

Rosa, Salvator, executive power of, 99

Rowe, Nicholas, his "Tragedy of Jane Shore," 116

Royal Academy, gives undue importance to inferior men, 104  
 — Sir Thomas Lawrence's mistake at Academy dinner, 149  
 — why a certain painter desired to become member, 161  
 — a saying of John Opie, 163  
 — drawback of the exhibitions, 163  
 — expensive picture-frames sent to, 163  
 — Northcote and his membership, 164  
 — Joseph Farington's power, 165  
 — the cause of certain painters assuming qualities of arrogance and impudence, 170  
 — membership nothing to be unduly elated with, 171  
 — applications for charity made by artists to, 185

Rubens, a dangerous model for students, 63  
 — a great genius, 64  
 — his black draperies, 107

*Rutland and his Tutor*, Northcote's, 12

ST ALBANS, Duchess of, 215

*St Paul preaching at Athens*, Raphael's, 58

*St Peter Martyr*, Titian's, 58, 120, 234

St Vincent, Lord, 158

Scotland, the noble families of, 195

Scott, Sir Walter, Northcote's, quarrel as to, 129

Shakespeare, miraculous part of his character, 53  
 — unrivalled in representation of all earthly passions, 57  
 — compared with Homer, 95  
 — and the modesty of nature, 101  
 — his language addressed to the ear, 115  
 — what he would think of his own plays as an imitation of nature, 199  
 — his plays seldom acted before Garrick's time, 241

Shakespeare Gallery. *See* Boydell

Sharpe, Joshua, Sir J. Reynolds', 68

## INDEX

Siddons, Mrs., Queen Caroline's anecdote of, 83  
 —— deference paid to, 84

Sixtus V., anecdote of, 46

Sterne, Laurence, Sir J. Reynolds', 68

Stewardson, Thomas, his method of proceeding with a portrait, 207

Strafford, Lord, Vandyke's, 68

Superstition, 84

Swift, Dean, and the monkey tribe, 131

Tarleton, Colonel, Sir Joshua Reynolds', 225

Teniers, David, 105, 106

Thomson, Henry, his disgust upon being accosted in a familiar manner, 172

Thorwaldsen, Albert B., his lack of originality, 140

Tintoretto, Titian's jealousy of, 57

Titian, quality of breadth in his works, 50  
 —— was a mannerist, 52  
 —— his skill in the painting of groups, 53  
 —— dress of his period and complexion of sitters of great assistance to him, 54  
 —— his earliest portraits always carefully finished, 66  
 —— greatest colourist of the world, 88  
 —— how his grey flesh-tints were obtained, 100  
 —— his great superiority not due to knowledge of any rules of art, 102  
 —— the expression in one of his portraits in the Louvre, 144  
 —— how he would have represented Bonaparte, 158  
 —— never considered his pictures finished, 220  
 —— a painter's foolish criticism of the *St Peter Martyr*, 234

Transfiguration, The, Raphael's, 222

Turner, J. M. W., 237

VANDEVELDE, William, 224

Vandyke, works of, compared with those of Titian, 51  
 —— safest model for students, 67

Vandyke, his exquisite manner of painting the English complexion, 68  
 —— a fine colourist, 101  
 —— his mode of working, 104  
 —— how he probably commenced his pictures, 108  
 —— how he would have represented Bonaparte, 158

Vatican, Northcote's adventure in, 44

Velasquez, 68, 69

*View of the Mall in St James's Park*, Gainsborough's, 160

Virtues, constitutional, 228

"Vortigern," Ireland's counterfeit play, 88

WALPOLE, Horace, his legacy for the maintenance of a dog, 133

Ward, James, birth, 15  
 —— settles in London, 15  
 —— commences long friendship with Northcote, 18  
 —— his visit to the Louvre, 140  
 —— his warning as to the encouraging of young men to become artists, 181

Watts, Dr Isaac, his purity of motive, 91

Wealth, possession of, not always a barrier to true enterprise, 169  
 —— instances of envy, 179

Wentworth, Mr. and Mrs., Sir Joshua Reynolds', 212

West, Benjamin, his executive power, 99  
 —— was a learned painter, 153  
 —— his introduction to Cardinal Albani, 154  
 —— his meeting with the bishops, 154  
 —— his high opinion of his own works, 174  
 —— his historical paintings, 188

Wilkie, Sir David, 64, 144, 162, 237

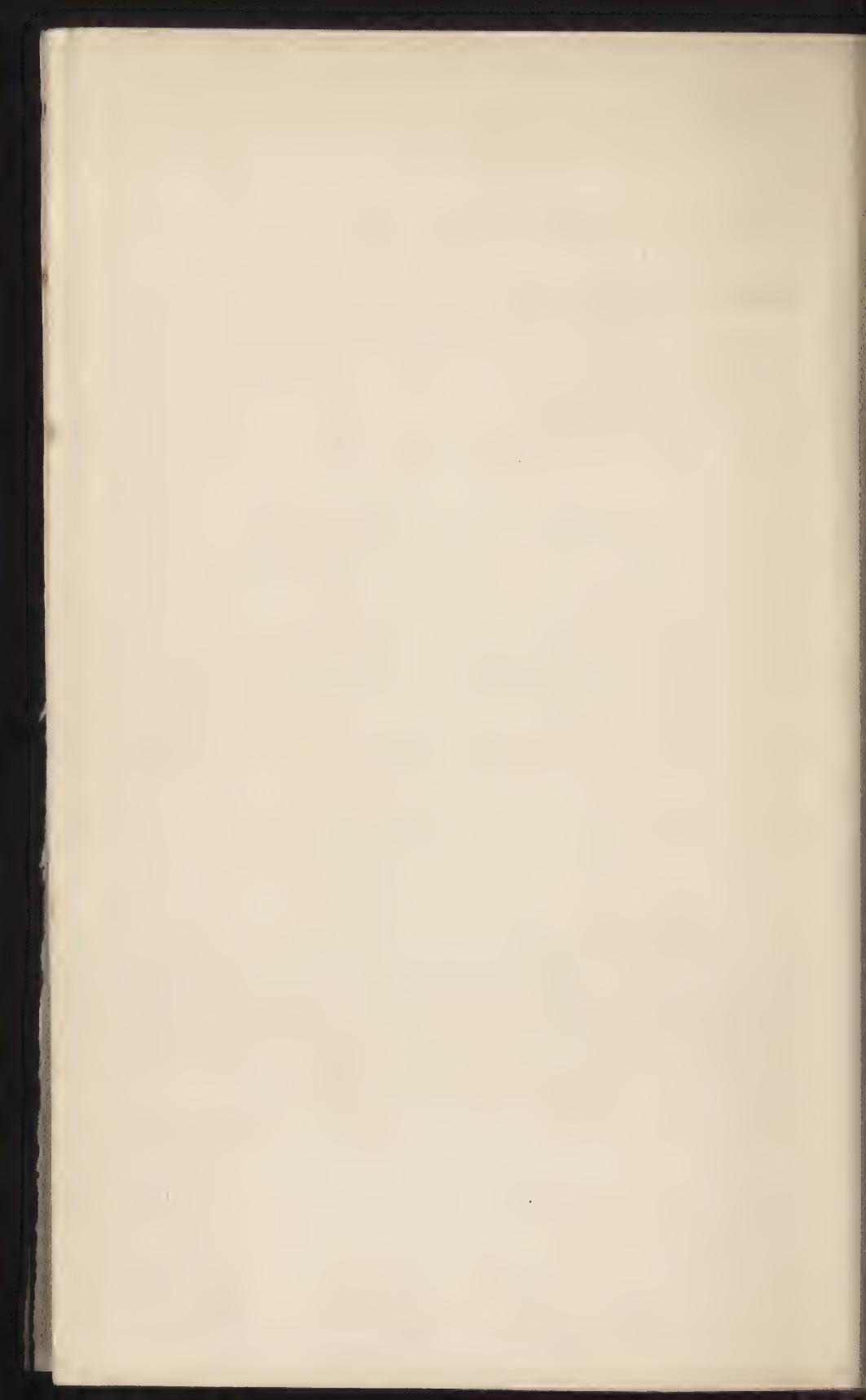
William IV. *See* Clarence, Duke of

Wilson, Richard, compared with Gainsborough, 160

Wolcot, Dr John, 21, 206

*Young Princes murdered in the Tower*, The, Northcote's, 12

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
FORTHCOMING BOOKS, . . . . .	2
POETRY, . . . . .	9
BELLES LETTRES, ANTHOLOGIES, ETC., . . . . .	10
ILLUSTRATED AND GIFT BOOKS, . . . . .	14
HISTORY, . . . . .	15
BIOGRAPHY, . . . . .	17
TRAVEL, ADVENTURE AND TOPOGRAPHY, . . . . .	18
NAVAL AND MILITARY, . . . . .	20
GENERAL LITERATURE, . . . . .	22
PHILOSOPHY, . . . . .	24
THEOLOGY, . . . . .	24
FICTION, . . . . .	30
BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS, . . . . .	40
THE PEACOCK LIBRARY, . . . . .	40
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERIES, . . . . .	40
SOCIAL QUESTIONS OF TO-DAY . . . . .	41
CLASSICAL TRANSLATIONS, . . . . .	42
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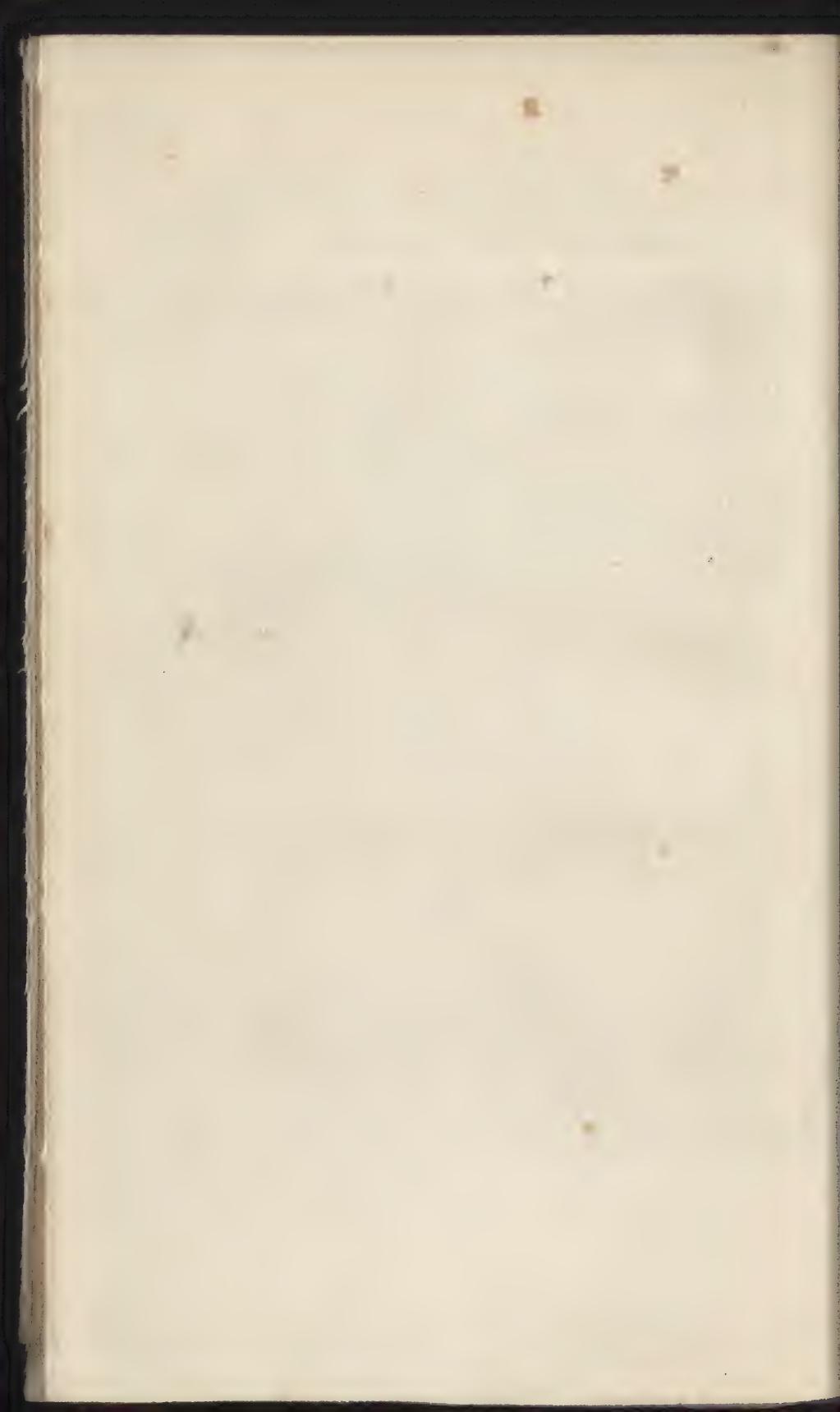
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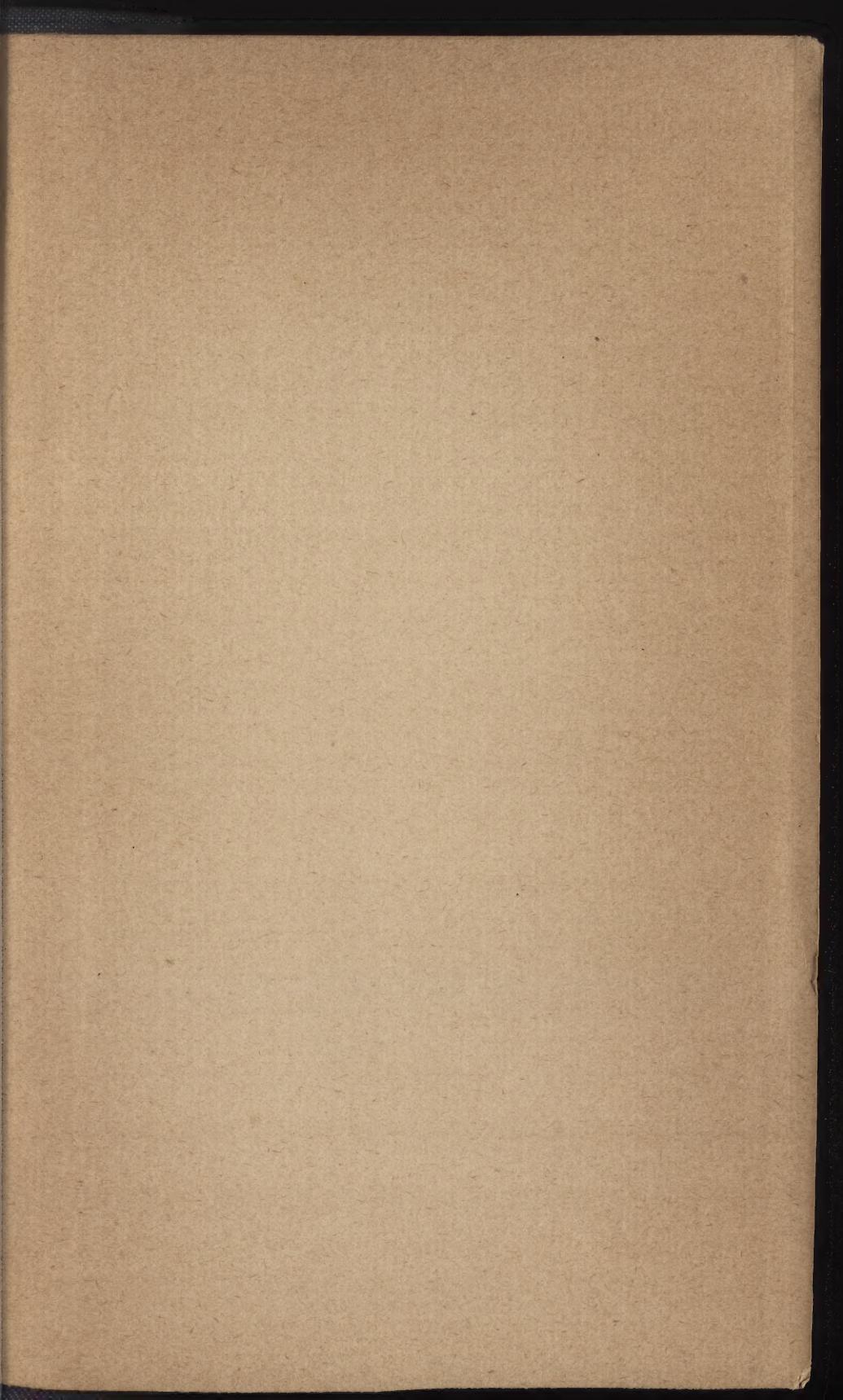
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